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AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

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SHORT MISSIONARY PLAYS

SOME BOYS AND GIRLS IN AMERICA

MISSIONARY STORIES FOR LITTLE
FOLKS—Primary. Illustrated

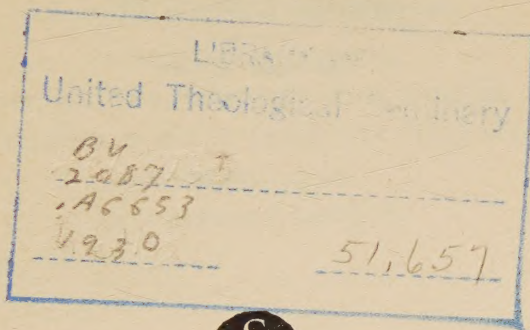
MISSIONARY STORIES FOR LITTLE
FOLKS—Junior. Illustrated

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

Stories To Tell

BY

MARGARET T. APPEGARTH



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NEW YORK

1930



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UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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TO
ALL THE SAINTS
WHO HAVE ALWAYS FOLLOWED
WITH UNFAILING INTEREST
THE AUTHOR'S ADVENTURES WITH RAINBOWS
(WHETHER IN SKY OR WARDROBE OR PERSONS!)

THESE STORIES ARE
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.

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CHILDREN'S DAY:

Any of the stories would be suitable for this occasion, told in costume.

AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

At the Foot of the Rainbow

I

THE POT OF GOLD AT THE FOOT OF THE RAINBOW

THE ARTIST wanted that pot terribly. Because he was so poor.

"I will paint something wonderful, then I will become rich," he had vowed to himself when he was very young and did not know any better. But although he had painted yards and yards of canvasses he was just as poor as ever. But always he dreamed of that pot of gold. How did one get it, anyhow?

"By doing something different!" the world suggested as it hurried by his door. "Do something that will make us stop. And look. And listen. Shock us! Surprise us! Annoy us! Amuse us! See what nobody else sees! Paint what nobody else paints! Mix colors on your palette nobody else has ever mixed!"

So the Artist tramped over the entire globe trying to find something nobody else had ever painted. But no matter what he tried somebody else had done it first, so that the pot of gold seemed as far away as ever.

And then one day when he was an old old man he wandered back to the quaint little town where he had been born. The trees still stood in prim little rows, and the pointed gables of the neat little houses still

seemed to have come straight out of a fairy story book. Suddenly he knew that something was going to happen at last; so he walked to the very center of the town and there, in an open square, was still the same beautiful fountain. When he saw it he said "oh!" Everybody always did. That was because the single spray of water rose up and up and up in a column so slender he could almost count the drops, like beads on a necklace. And they rose because the Stone Angel That Troubles the Waters had stooped down to touch the little pool at her feet; and where her finger touched, a tiny jet sprang upward in a arch across her kneeling figure, and the spray fell into a curious bowl she held in her other arm.

"Oh," said the Artist, "I had forgotten how lovely you are, good angel."

"Yes?" she chanted softly through the silvery spray above her.

And just then the setting sun touched her glistening bowl and turned it to gleaming gold, making rainbows through the mist of the spray.

"At last! At last! My pot of gold!" cried the Artist, and tried to start painting at once. But you know how it is—the sun never waits for an artist to set up his easel and prop up his canvas and hook his palette over his thumb and dip his brush in the proper shade. Behold, by the time he was ready, there was just the lovely dim tinkle of water left, and the same stooping angel. . . .

"Alas! the pot of gold has eluded me again," he cried in despair.

"It is always just eluding mankind, isn't it?" queried a voice through the spray.

"But this seemed like the real thing, because of the rainbow. They are so scarce—rainbows! Always, wherever I go, I try to paint them, but they are gone before I get started."

"Scarce? But there is always a rainbow wherever you look and whenever you look!"

"You mean, just in this town?"

"I mean, in any town."

"But I can't believe that. I have been all over the world, in every sort of town, looking and looking for rainbows—and a pot of gold at the foot of them. I tell you they are scarce!"

"Oh, blind man! Blind man! You don't look in the proper places. But I know, yes, I know! For centuries I have been here, day in and day out, year in and year out; and instead of tramping the world, the world has tramped by me, and I see what I see, blind man."

"What do you see?"

"I see rainbows every hour of every day. Rainbows fit for you to paint—rainbows in the moods of men, in the moods of women, in the moods of children. They keep walking by and walking by and walking by. But always their moods make colors. Colors no painter has ever painted yet. Beautiful colors. And dreadful ones, never seen on land or sea."

The Artist pulled out his sketch-book. "Tell me, tell me!" he cried. "Tell me these colors."

"They are little and foolish and dear, some of them. They are big and pompous and proud, some of them.

They are lonely and empty and tired, some of them. I love them all. I should think you could fill a whole book with those colors. I would begin with the little and foolish and dear moods, if I were you."

"Tell me, tell me!" urged the Artist.

"Well, there walked by here only a short while ago, Little Papoose in his new pantaloons, and you could easily say of his mood that he was 'tickled pink,' and Sister Susie, too. Why don't you write that down on page 138. And then there are all the 'blue as indigo' moods: the Thumb Print of a Shadow is one blueness, and Little Squaw Scared of Her Wigwam is another blueness; page 262 for the first; page 146 for the second. And not long ago they carried by here the Boy Who Fell Off the Roof—it wasn't hard to see that his mood was 'white as a sheet.' Put him down on page 91. 'Red as a beet' would fit so many moods of happiness and embarrassment, Mr. Smith and his new Honk! Honk! for instance—paint him on page 216, and the Six Who Tasted the Onion Stew, on page 117. Then there are all the shades of being 'green with envy'—there would be a nice Nile green in Crocodile Tears, an oriental jade green in Belinda Jane Searching for a Mother and a decidedly blue green in the Stretchability of Little Mr. India Rubber. Note your pages carefully for these three: 175, 68, and 239. As for the 'brown as a berry' cases, there's the Foolish Skipping Sari for page 246, and the Pinch of Pickled Tea for page 165, and Catarina's Nine Tales for page 160, O Fudge! for page 206, not to mention any num-

ber of others you could find if you kept your eyes open.

The Artist was filling his book delightedly: "Go on, good angel, go on!"

"Well, for 'yellow as gold,' I would suggest an Ode to a Chinese Lily, put it on page 48. As for 'purple with rage' you will find it Twenty Miles from Sunday, it could begin on page 252. And then all that wonderful lot of persons 'not as black as they are painted': remember Dinah, Out of Sorts; Rosabella, Fair and Warmer; 'Benezzer, Brought His Best; save pages 26, 19, and 33 for them. But of them all, I think Uncle Jasper would repay you best, for his Rainbow Railroad could take you straight to the throne of God. For he can show you what a human rainbow really is, and then you would never want to paint anything else. People would flock to your studio curiously: 'Look—this Artist is a genius! He paints what can't be seen! Look at the purples in his rages and those greens in his envies!' You would be hailed as the master of a new art, and no pot of gold would be quite large enough to hold the richness which would come to you."

Then the Artist cried in despair: "But I am too old! I have spent my time traveling and traveling until my back is too bent and my bones are too tired. Now that you mention it I realize what colors I have seen on those trips of mine, but where would I find a canvas big enough to hold it all, and no canvas that will last forever."

"Why not try painting it in the imagination of some

little child? For there's no limit to that imagination: it can widen and widen and widen to let the whole world in!"

And the Artist began to smile. For this *was* a new idea, one which no artist had ever tried before—for imagine painting human rainbows on the mind of a little child! So that although he is still very poor, you can almost always find him with a little crowd of children at his knee, he will wave his arm with its imaginary brush and paint in trees and houses and people and moods . . . you can simply *see* his rainbows! Yet when the light shines through they all become one color. *One color!*

"And what color is that?" the children are always asking.

"Well, it hasn't any name that I know of! Yet you can always tell it, for the people are kind and gentle and merciful, and thoughtful and helpful."

There is usually one rather lovely child to linger afterwards, to say wistfully: "Do you know what I think? I think it's *God's* color!"

So then the Artist knows that he has started painting on another canvas wide enough and big enough to include the rainbow of all men everywhere.

(And do you want to know what I wonder many times? I wonder if his pot of gold is not the one God uses to keep the streets of Heaven so golden. Anyhow, I hope so!)

II

AND GOD SAID THE FIVE DRESSES WERE GOOD

THIS is what Miss Mary told us, standing in the front of the room, with everybody all eyes and ears, because it was our story hour. She said that once upon a time there was a party, and she was invited. So of course then we knew we were going to love it a lot, because parties are such heaps of fun to hear about.

It was still summer-time, so Miss Mary said that the minute she opened her closet door and saw her little white dress hanging there, she knew that that was the one to wear; and afterwards she was ever so glad she had chosen it, for everybody at the party simply raved about her dress! "Oh my dear! My dear!" they kept saying. "You're a perfect dream! You're the loveliest thing in it! It fits you like a glove!" And they patted her, and kissed her, and said all the other things people do say about dresses—I can't remember them all; but we were just ever and ever so proud that our own Miss Mary had been the belle of the ball! So we began loving her with our eyes.

Well, it seems that a little while later there was another party, and she was invited. So she opened her closet door, and there hung her white dress; but of course she really didn't want to wear it again when she had other dresses just as lovely; anyhow, it was early

Fall by that time, so she chose a yellow dress: "Because I thought maybe it would look rather gay and jolly on a dull day. But do you know? Nobody raved about that dress! Which was really very funny, for it was made exactly like my white dress—every single little tuck was exactly the same, and even all the little wrinkles came in just the same places. And it fitted me just like a glove, too. I had supposed that people would be loving me in it; but no, they were polite enough, yet stand-off-ish; so that I felt that somehow or other I had chosen unwisely in wearing yellow. Although it was the most heavenly shade, my dears."

So then we all sighed and sighed, and scowled and scowled, to think that anybody anywhere had dared to make our own Miss Mary unhappy. But it was good news to hear that she was invited to the next party.

"But you may be sure I did not wear the yellow dress! Of course, by this time it was later in the Fall, so the minute I opened my closet door and saw a red dress hanging there I knew that was the very thing to choose. So I went to my party all cheerful and gay. Everyone was nice enough to me, I suppose, but I wanted them to be very nice—you know, friendly and loving and telling me what they thought. But they just offered me ice cream and cake, and somebody said: 'These are wonderful Fall days we are having, aren't they?' So then I knew I wasn't much of a success or they wouldn't have to come down to mere *weather* in talking to me as if I were almost a stranger. This was so shortsighted, because the red dress was

made just exactly like my white one—every tiniest tuck like the white tucks, every smallest wrinkle in just the same places where the white wrinkles came; and it fitted me perfectly. So I went home very unhappy, and since nobody had been dear and warm and friendly I decided I would probably never be invited again.”

“Were you?” we asked breathlessly.

“Yes, I was! By this time it was winter, so when I opened my closet door you may be sure I was saying to myself: ‘This time I’ll chose something inconspicuous! Probably I was too gay and noticeable before!’ So there was a brown dress, just the coziest, warmest shade of brown. ‘Oh, this is becoming to me!’ I crooned to myself the minute I got it on, so that I felt like skipping along the street because I was so sure I couldn’t help but be popular in something so adorable. But would you believe it? Everyone stared at me distantly, as if I were somebody from somewhere else; but nobody came up to chat with me, not even about the weather. They bowed in a strange frozen way and walked past me, and not one single person patted my sleeve and said: ‘Your dress is the loveliest thing I ever saw.’ Not one! And yet, my dears, it was just beautiful, and every tuck and every wrinkle was absolutely like every tuck and every wrinkle in that first white dress. I went home discouraged, I tell you!”

As for *us*, we felt thunderstruck. What could have come over people? Then Miss Mary went on:

“But I decided not to feel touchy or hurt; that would have been cowardly. So I held my head high, because I knew what I knew about those dresses. And

by and by there was another party, with another invitation for me; so I screwed up my courage again and decided to go. But when I opened my closet door I made up my mind to chose the quietest and most beautiful dress I owned. Darlings, it was a black dress—as soft as midnight velvet, with all that dear soft darkness of deep pansy petals. Oh, black is such a lovely color! And this was a dream, a perfect dream! So perfect, and *quiet*, and exquisite. ‘Nobody could possibly find any fault with this one,’ I said to myself. Yet when I got there . . . oh, when I got there! Why, it was almost as if I were not there! Nobody came up to shake hands. Nobody called out: ‘How do you do, Mary!’ Nobody offered me refreshments. Nobody said: ‘Nice day!’ which is the least little bit of a sentence you *can* say at a party, it seems to me. Nobody ever even looked at me, all decked out in my best loved black dress. Suddenly I was somebody who wasn’t there at all. And yet I’m boasting to you that that precious black dress had tucks and wrinkles which didn’t differ by one single inch from every single tuck and wrinkle in my white dress. Well, by and by, when I saw nobody would be missing me, I went into the hall and I opened the front door, I stepped over the sill, I shut the door and went down the front steps. Nobody ran after me to say: ‘Going so early, Mary? Come on back!’ And something began hurting me very much. Right here!” And she laid her hand on her heart.

Well, it hurt us too! So I shall have to tell you that one of us blurted right out: “But didn’t you *tell* them you were all the same person? Why didn’t you say:

'I'm all the same Miss Mary whatever dress I wear!' They must have been blind, Miss Mary dear, not to have recognized *you!*'

Miss Mary nodded: "I'm so very glad you feel that way about it. For that's just the way God feels about it, too. You see, when He began making His children He knew perfectly well that they were all just exactly alike, because that was the way He was making them: eye for eye, tooth for tooth, bone for bone, all alike. But He simply loves beauty and He loves variety too, so that He had a whole row of little rainbow dresses for children waiting in His closet—for what is skin but the dress our bodies wear? And when God is making a child all He has to do is to open that door and take down one of the five rainbow colors. 'I think this one will be the loveliest for you, dearest,' he whispers and begins buttoning that child in it, just like that, saying: 'But mind you keep it clean all day.' And that is really all He cares about; except that—standing the child off—He says just as He did when He made the world: 'It is good!' So if it seems good to God, how foolish if it doesn't seem good to us, too!"

We nodded our heads, understandingly: "For all those skin dresses are exactly alike, aren't they, Miss Mary? Even down to the last little tuck and the last little wrinkle?"

"Yes, they are!" Miss Mary admitted. "God must think it one of the strangest sights in His world to see any child dressed in a white skin putting on airs and acting superior toward any child dressed in a black skin or a brown skin or a red skin or a yellow skin.

Just so that you can always remember this about God, suppose you open your Bibles to Romans two, verse eleven. What does it say?"

"There is no respect of persons with God."

"Quite so! Which is simply another way of saying that He really doesn't notice the dress at all; that He feels no kinder toward persons in white skin dresses than toward persons in black skin dresses."

So we all decided then and there that if only all the world remembered this always, just as we were planning to remember it forever and ever and ever, then the world would be a very much happier place for everybody to live in. All of a sudden we understood that that was exactly what the herald angels meant when the little Lord Jesus was born (and suddenly we began remembering something else—that God selected a little brown dress for His own little Baby to wear!) for they sang: "Peace on earth among men of *good will*." For if you can only keep your will good enough and kind enough then you need never notice anybody's dress.

Sometimes I wish, yes I really do, that everybody had five dresses instead of just one! For then everybody could wear the same color—all of us in brown on Monday, red on Tuesday, yellow Wednesday, white on Thursday, black on Friday. Then on Saturday, which is a holiday, perhaps God would let us choose our favorite; and on Sunday—well on Sunday I think we would want to wear the particular dress He Himself had chosen especially for each of us. And nobody would feel like snubbing anybody, because from Mon-

day to Friday we would all be knowing how natural and contented we can feel wearing any one of the five dresses. Then we too could stand off and look at them as God looks, saying:

“Yes, they are good!”

It's really the most beautiful secret in the whole world when once you know it. Only you really can't keep it a secret—just try it, and see!

III

ALL ABOARD THE RAINBOW RAILROAD

YES, honey ever since I been knee-high to a grass-hopper your old Uncle Jasper he been powerful scart of dying. But landy sakes, I ain't being scart no more, honey chile. Cause why? Cause last night I done went up to heaven my own self, deed I did.

You see, I took the trip on the rainbow railroad, and I reckon there ain't any other trip quite so jolly and so powerful good fun as that there trip. There were li'l boys and li'l girls on board, just a-loving of that trip, honey chile, all the same as you would have loved it—it was jes' the lubliest experience, and I ain't nebber going to be scart of dying again. Why, honey, seems like I jes' can't wait for to die now.

Now I'se going to tell you all about the rainbow railroad, honey. You see, last night jes' as usual I done open my Good Book for to read a few of the things the Lord God has writ for me specially, and what do you 'spect my eyes lighted on but these words: "And there was a rainbow round the throne." And says I to myself, says I: "Now I sure would like to see that rainbow!" Which words I had no sooner said than I was suddenly off on a train of thought, honey chile. And a train of thought is jes' a railroad, ain't it, honey?

But a rainbow railroad is the most excitingest railroad you jes' ever see in all your born days. Deed it is!

First place, it starts down here in the Land of the Pot of Gold. Then it goes swooping up and up from earth to heaven, but it don't go all in one gate, honey. No indeedy! for ain't you remembering how the Good Book says that up in heaven is three gates on a side, and four sides? Now I 'spect you got more sense in 'rithmetic than I got, so maybe you can figger out powerful quick how many three times four makes. Twelve, ain't it? Sure, twelve. That's jes' what I figgered my own self. Well now, with those twelve gates up in heaven it jes' stands to reason that all the trains on the rainbow railroad ain't going through the very same gate, honey.

No indeedy. So all the li'l childrens on the north, they went through the gates on the north side; and all the li'l childrens on the south, they went through the gates on the south side; and all the li'l childrens on the east, they went through the gates on the east side; and all the li'l childrens on the west, they went through the gates on the west side. And the Lord God was so powerful wise in making heaven, he didn't have jes' one gate on each side, but three gates. So it ain't necessary for each and every person on the north to go through the same gate! I'se sure much obliged to the Lord God for making it possible for me to go through the gate easiest for me my own self to go through. So I don't have to go through the gate of the stylish folkses, or the gate of the wise folkses, or the gate of the rich folkses. But the Lord God knew old

Uncle Jasper was going to be shabby and ignorant and poor all his born days, so he's got a gate on my side of heaven all fixed and ready for folkses jes' like me.

And not only jes' like me, but jes' like you. And jes' like every single person what ever rode on God's rainbow railroad.

Cause now I'se going to explain you all about that railroad. There is five colors in it, and each color is jes' the prettiest color God has got. There is the yellow cars, jes' plumb full of yellow folkses from China and Japan. There is the brown cars, jes' plumb full of brown folkses from India and Arabia and Persia. There is the red cars, jes' plumb full of Injuns from America. There is the black cars, jes' plumb full of folkses like me from Africa and from America. And then of course there is the pink cars, jes' plumb full of all you white folkses from America and Europe. Now if that ain't a pretty combination—yellow and brown and red and black and white—why, I want to know!

I jes' guess the Lord God He couldn't have done prettier if He'd tried and tried and tried. So when we all got off the railroad and stood around the beautiful big white throne, we sure did look lovely, we was all so many colors, all the same as the Good Book says: "There was a rainbow round the throne!"

There is another place in the Good Book where it says the very same thing in other words. Perhaps you mind them, honey: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and cried with a loud voice, 'Salvation to our

God which sitteth on the throne. . . . Blessing and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever. Amen.' "

Honey, it was the thrillingest, beautifulest sight, that rainbow was! All those happy folkses, busy a-telling the Lord God how they loved Him! And everybody feeling friendly toward everybody else; everybody wanting to tell everybody else which gate he came through, and then laughing hard to realize it didn't make a speck of difference to a blessed one of us whether we came through the east gate of the yellow folkses or the east gate of the brown folkses.

"Dear me," we kept a-saying to each other, "really I can hardly recollect which gate I *did* come through!" And, honey, that was because we wasn't thinking so much of our own selves as of the others. We were so powerful drawn to each and every one of these other folkses. We were so powerful curious to know what the Lord God had made of *them*. "Jes' tell me some more about your own self," we would say. And they would start, then they'd stop to say, "But you tell me all about *your* own self." Why, honey, we could have spent eternities a-meeting each other that-a-way, and talking that-a-way, all about what the Lord God had done for us.

But jes' when I was a-loving of it the most and feeling gladdest I was all nicely fixed in heaven forever and ever, if it ain't morning! And if I ain't wide awake down on earth in my own ole bed! Oh, say, honey, I was that disappointed!

But all of a sudden God's Good Book gave me another train of thought, for I read these here words: "The kingdom of heaven is *in* you!"

So, honey, I'se been cogitating on those lovely words. If heaven is *in* me, then that rainbow ought to be in me too! Deed it ought! And I ought to spend every waking moment trying to make His kingdom come—on earth as it is in heaven. So I'm jumping on board the rainbow railroad this very minute, and I'se going to love every single folkses the whole world round forever and ever, cause that's the onliest way to make His kingdom come on earth! Deed it is!

IV

FAIR AND WARMER

THE class in Daily Themes gave a gasp of dismay: it was bad enough to have to write a composition every day, but when the teacher ordered a fairy story due the following morning, there was a buzz of protest, and the recess hour was spent in talking it over with all the other poor victims. Or rather, with all the poor victims except Rosabella. For nobody ever talked anything over with her. Left high and dry she was, like a ship out of water. You would not have supposed it possible for twenty-seven pairs of eyes to look right at Rosabella and still never, never, never *see* her! Nor for twenty-seven pairs of feet to walk home from school and yet never walk beside Rosabella's pair of feet. There were twenty-seven pairs of hands that never shook Rosabella's hands, and twenty-seven pairs of arms that never went around Rosabella's waist.

Yet there was no sign on Rosabella which said: "Hands off!" Not a sign of a sign! Yet those twenty-seven maidens were so constructed that they took a positive pride in not being able to look at Rosabella, or speak to her. All of which was due to Angelina.

Angelina was the class beauty. She was one of those interesting-looking girls: you positively couldn't keep your eyes off her lovely face and her golden hair and

her slender white wrists. Doing what Angelina dictated was a regular cult with the twenty-six other girls; so when Angelina said with a positive shudder: "Somehow or other, I can't bear to even *look* at Rosabella; and as for sitting next to her, I simply couldn't. I might *faint*! I really might!" Which was such an exquisite tribute to Angelina's delicate rose-and-white-and-gold beauty that every one of the twenty-six other girls believed it and tried their hardest to feel faint and delicate when Rosabella drew near. So that if the fairy story episode had not surprised the entire class into becoming fair and warmer, I really do not know where Rosabella would be today.

For not only were there twenty-seven members of the English class toiling and moiling over reams of paper, but the twenty-eighth member of the class also sat up late, and toiled and moiled. For writing is a vexatious nuisance at the best of times; but fairy stories are *impossibly* exacting. In which opinion the poor English teacher agreed, as—in her turn—she toiled and moiled correcting those same reams of paper the following evening. Twenty-seven such stupid papers, with twenty-seven such stupid wooden fairies waving twenty-seven such wooden wands.

She was, therefore, totally unprepared when she opened the twenty-eighth story entitled: "A Dream of Fair Women." Like every English teacher that ever was born, she kept her red pencil poised for instant use; yet actually she was so astonished that she read straight through that theme without once moving her pencil from mid-air, and when she had come to the last

word she searched vainly for her handkerchief,—an article she had never needed at the end of any other English composition, I assure you!

If I quote this “Dream of Fair Women” to you verbatim, it is not because of the English, nor because it was marked 100 per cent, nor even because the teacher used her handkerchief. But you can judge for yourself. It ran like this:—

Once upon a time there were twenty-seven snow-white maidens and the snow-whitest one of all was Seraphina. Seraphina was very beautiful: her skin was so white and her wrists were so slender, her hair was so golden and her eyes were so blue; when Seraphina laughed it was like little bells tinkling in a summer breeze. There was nobody quite like Seraphina. And even the dreadful Blunderbuss adored her. But adored her at a space fully thirty-six inches away: for one inch nearer, and Seraphina would have fainted, for the dreadful Blunderbuss was neither white nor golden nor blue-eyed.

So the Fairy-Who-Maintains-A-Just-Balance-Among-Mortals fell to worrying about the relations between Seraphina and the Blunderbuss.

“This will not do!” said she in that tone of voice which works havoc with complacent mortals, and the first thing anyone knew, the havoc was at work on Seraphina. At the wave of the fairy’s wand, Seraphina’s golden hair grew gradually kinky and inky, her snow-white skin tanned brown, then black in hue, her sapphire eyes grew brown like dusky pools. But Seraphina was unconscious of the metamorphosis even when

she looked into the glass; because, of course, she *felt* the same, and took it for granted that the way she was, was right! And that was the end of the matter. At least, it was the end until she went to school, and then it was the beginning of trouble. For twenty-six cold shoulders were turned on Seraphina.

"Whatever has struck you all to act so absurdly?" cried Seraphina, stamping her slender foot, for she was not used to being snubbed.

Twenty-six pairs of eyes stared straight through Seraphina, and twenty-six haughty voices coolly said: "Now isn't this the limit? *Another* Blunderbuss in our midst!"

Seraphina's eyes snapped angrily. "If this is a joke, girls, I fail to see the point, for I don't mind telling you that you're hurting me terribly. It's positively un-Christian of you to say I'm a Blunderbuss when you know perfectly that I'm Seraphina."

"*Seraphina!*" giggled twenty-six merry voices, "why, Seraphina would faint if she came within a yard of touching skin your color."

So then Seraphina looked at her skin, and she simply couldn't see a thing the matter with it, because it felt soft to the touch and she knew it was cool and clean and sweet. But it was very evident that something *was* the matter with her, and she was nearly dying of loneliness and humiliation when the real Blunderbuss came along. Humbly, you know; and half afraid to come any nearer until she saw real tears dripping sadly down Seraphina's lovely dusky cheeks. This was so un-

expected a sight that the Blunderbuss did an amazing thing: she gathered Seraphina into her arms and planted a warm kiss right where the tears were thickest and saddest.

"You blessed adorable Seraphina, don't you cry, honey child! I know exactly how you feel, you're hungry all up and down inside you to be treated like a human being. Well, here I am; *I'm* human! *I'll* love you! For I know that in spite of your black skin and your inky, kinky hair, you're the same old Seraphina. You're just *girl*, inside that dark skin, honey!"

And Seraphina was greatly comforted; so hand in hand she and the Blunderbuss talked it over—the funny dreadful absurdity of letting mere color make such a chasm of difference: "Just as if a person wearing a *brown* jersey dress couldn't be as lovable and attractive as a person wearing a *white* jersey dress!" said Seraphina.

"Or as if a person who was tanned by the summer sun wasn't as good as a person who stayed white in the city all summer," the Blunderbuss added.

And the Fairy-Who-Maintains-A-Just-Balance-Among-Mortals felt that experiment number one had been such a success that she would repeat it the next day. Whereupon there were *three* Blunderbusses snickering over the tragic absurdity, and *twenty-five* snow-white girls turning twenty-five cold shoulders. Indeed the fairy grew so delighted with the friendships among the Blunderbusses that she kept right on transforming one snow-white maiden daily into a jet-black

lassie, until in the course of time there was only one white girl left to turn a cold shoulder on the twenty-seven contented black ones.

But on the day when she, too, was made over, the fairy appeared before them all and said briskly: "Now, my dears, of course I can't *leave* you like this, so I shall have to wave my wand and turn you back into the colors which it pleased the Lord God to give you. Speak up now, who wants to be changed first?"

And would you believe it? There was not a sound! Then Seraphina said gently: "If it's all the same to everybody else, I hope you'll keep me till the twenty-seventh, good fairy, because I can't bear to think of losing dear Blunderbuss. She's been so wonderful to me, and she's every bit as nice as anyone I ever knew! As a matter of fact, I really wouldn't care if you *never* turned me white again—for I'm just as human and just as jolly and just-as-everything-else when I'm black as when I'm white!"

"Ah," smiled the Fairy-Who-Maintains-A-Just-Balance-Among-Mortals, "then I really fear I must change you *first*, Seraphina, so that you can influence your twenty-six other friends when they become white again and are inclined to feel superior. . . ."

"Oh!" "Oh!" "Oh!" echoed from twenty-six chagrined maidens, "don't you think we've learned our lesson yet, dear fairy? Why, when you have your eyes shut you can't tell whether a person is black or white!"

The fairy smiled sadly. "What I want you to do the rest of your lives, my dears, is to *keep your eyes open* and still not notice whether a person is black or white."

"We will!" said Seraphina solemnly.

"We will!" "We will!" "We will!" echoed Seraphina's devotees. So the fairy waved her wand, and instantly there were twenty-seven snow-white maidens and one black Blunderbuss. But *always* there were twenty-seven pairs of hands held out affectionately toward the pair of black hands, and twenty-seven pairs of feet to walk homeward beside the pair of black feet; and they all lived happily ever after.

Do I need to tell you that the English teacher read that story to the class, and that the influential Angelina saw herself in Seraphina? So that twenty-seven pairs of startled eyes looked at the wistful Rosabella and wondered how it really would feel to have black cheeks and be scorned for it! Twenty-seven hearts felt guilty, and twenty-seven heads hung down in shame. But from that day onward it was decidedly fair and warmer in that school, and there really *was* no Blunderbuss scholar as far as snobbishness went and delicate disdain and deliberate superiority. For they had learned the greatest Christian lesson—that "of *one* blood the Lord God made all the sons of man for to dwell on the face of the whole earth."

V

OUT OF SORTS

DINAH was having a day off.

And what could be a more perfect combination than five dollars plus a day off?

Early in the morning she had started from home at the very same hour as usual, but instead of turning to the left down the street that led to the Perfection Laundry Company, she turned to the right down the street that would bring one eventually to the Golden Hour Amusement Park. She debated several minutes whether she should spend any of that precious money for carfare in order to reach the Park quicker; afterwards she was very glad that she had not squandered five cents so foolishly, for—as it was—she reached the grounds two hours before the gate attendant arrived.

“Lazy old thing!” she sighed, and sat down on a big stone to wait. But she did not mind the waiting as much as you might suppose, for never in her entire life had she had time to sit on a stone and wait two solid hours. At the Perfection Laundry Company there was no such thing as sitting for two hours, for there were always great bags and bundles of soiled laundry waiting to be sorted. To appreciate Dinah at her best, you should have seen her expertly sorting those clothes

with a flip of her slender black wrist—collars went scurrying down one chute, cuffs down another, shirts here, underclothes there; and always, before she dared let anything leave her hand, there must be a swift glance to see if the proper laundry mark were in place. Perhaps you can imagine that soiled clothes became rather monotonous when seen hour after hour and day after day. Small wonder that she was *out of sorts* occasionally, and that she had been looking forward to this holiday for weeks.

Now that it was actually here, Dinah sat on her stone debating which of the amusements she wanted to try first, and when the gate-keeper finally arrived, Dinah paid her admission and hurried straight for the Ferris Wheel.

“Reckon I can get the mostest excitement out of *that!*” she chuckled to herself, and it must be admitted that when the wheel began circling up into the air Dinah gave a startled gasp and wondered whether she would ever live to enjoy the rest of the five dollars! But when she was safely down on the earth once more, she knew that she would never be contented until she had experienced that horribly delicious sensation again, of sailing up to strike the clouds and sinking down, down, down to be smashed to pieces on the ground. But *twice* was not nearly enough; neither was three times, nor four times, nor five. In fact, the attendant really lost track of the number of complete revolutions Dinah had enjoyed, when Miss Sloan arrived on the scene with the Darby twins. They, poor children, had never been anywhere or seen anything, and the Golden

Hour Amusement Park was exactly and precisely and entirely what they wanted!

While they were scampering here and there, the attendant came up to Miss Sloan and said: "Lady, do you see that colored girl on the Ferris Wheel? Well, I'm terribly worried about her, mum, for she don't do nothing but go round and round and round. Like a squirrel in a cage, mum. Guess she's had about four dollars' worth of trips already, and don't look like she's meanin' to stop even yet. Wonder if you could just speak to her kindly? Think I've seen you here before with slum kids—so I figured out you was one of them social workers; bet you've got the proper words in your mouth this very minute for dealin' with such as her."

Miss Sloan feared in her heart that she did *not* have quite the proper words for such a delicate occasion, but nevertheless when the Ferris Wheel circled the spellbound Dinah earthward once more, Miss Sloan got in to sit beside her.

"You're such an expert by this time that I thought maybe you wouldn't mind if I sat beside you!" she laughed, in her friendly way, "you see, it's my first ride in one of these things, and I'm a bit nervous."

Dinah beamed: "That's the way I am yet, but I tell you what—when you're scarest, just let out a perfectly whopping yell and you'll be surprised how rested up it makes you inside. Why, Lady, I been tired out for nearly four years now, tired of shuntin' soiled collars down one chute and soiled shirts down another, but I declare to goodness if this loopin' up in the air hasn't rested me something wonderful. Kind of *un-*

winded the tired, that's what it's done. Why I'm made over—jess yellin' and lettin' the tired come out of me!"

Miss Sloan reached over and took the slender black hand in her hand. "Let me hang on to you," she begged; and Dinah had that magic sense of protectiveness in squeezing this unknown lady's white hand, and saying: "Hang on as tight as you've a mind to!" As the great wheel soared up and up and up, Dinah's scream was all that she had said it would be; and when the downward swoop seemed to be hurling them both into space Miss Sloan shut her eyes in a real panic, but Dinah called comfortingly: "Ain't it scare-y? But say, you come down so easy that it's like soap. Awful safe and easy."

Miss Sloan smiled gently: "Thank you! But once around will be enough for me. You see, I have the Darby twins to amuse; I'm wondering if you couldn't come and help me. They're dear little colored children who have never been to a park in their lives, and you would know better than I what to show them."

So Dinah spent the rest of her holiday playing with the Darby twins, eating with the Darby twins, going home with the Darby twins.

"Got any more like Jennie and Bennie?" she asked enthusiastically that evening.

"Dozens!" laughed Miss Sloan, "our Christian Center is full of them; why couldn't you come and help us some evening? There are girls your age, too, and you'll find us almost as thrilling at times as a Ferris Wheel!"

That was enough encouragement for Dinah, and al-

most any evening of the week you could have found her at that Negro Community House, either in a club learning to cook, or in a club learning to trim hats; and on Sundays she was in a Bible class. Even her laundry took on a new tinge of interest, for the days are not long when there is something to which one may look forward each evening! Yet one day when Dinah was tired and out of sorts, her great surprising temptation came. . . .

She was sorting a pile of clothes when a little chamois bag came tumbling out; rather a heavy little chamois bag—dull, drab, yet mysterious. She untied the cord at the top and gave a gasp of sheer surprise as she emptied the contents on the palm of her hand. For there lay a marvelous diamond ring set in platinum, a diamond wristwatch, a pin of clustered pearls and a necklace of blue stones.

"Glory be!" gasped Dinah, hardly daring to believe her eyes. Then quick as a flash she whisked them out of sight and continued to sort soiled clothes with her usual neatness and dispatch. But it was as if there were two Dinahs that morning. The first Dinah said: "I'm going to *wear* those jewels. Nobody saw me find them, so they're mine for keeps, and I'll be grand like some rich white lady. 'Deed I will be!"

But Dinah Number Two knew better: "Nobody saw you, Dinah Denton? Guess God saw you, didn't He? Guess God knows the very white lady those jewels belong to! 'Deed He does!" The first Dinah tossed her head: "All right, if I dassn't *wear* them, I

could *sell* them; guess they'd fetch a heap of money and I could buy me the grandest clothes."

Dinah Number Two looked Dinah Number One in the eye very sternly: "Do you or don't you belong to a Sunday School in this very town, Dinah Denton? And please jess recollect how the Bible tells you plain as day: 'Thou shalt not *steal*.'"

Dinah Number One stopped sorting clothes and took the chamois bag to the manager's office. "Look what came out in the sorting!" she said in a quiet, matter-of-fact way.

It pleased her that he gave a gasp of surprise as great as her own had been: "Why, there's several thousand dollars' worth of precious stones in this bag!" he said, and looked at Dinah to see whether she realized what she was handing back.

Dinah nodded: "Jess as I figured out. Reckon that lady will be mighty tickled to get them back!"

"Reckon she will," he said dryly, with an admiring glance at this girl who was honest and straight. And what the manager thought, the lady who had carelessly hidden her jewels in the laundry bag also thought. So when Dinah's next pay envelope was given her there was a reward in it of one hundred dollars, and a note from the Perfection Laundry Company thanking her for her honorable conduct and granting her two weeks' special vacation with wages, as a token of their gratitude.

Dinah fairly danced to the Center to show Miss Sloan.

"You won't be squandering any of it on Ferris Wheels this time, I know," Miss Sloan said proudly.

"No indeed," laughed Dinah, "but I been wondering—why couldn't I go to one of them summer conference places where they learn a girl how to be a leader? Don't you guess maybe I could be a leader, Miss Sloan?"

"Yes! Yes! Yes!" smiled that lady, enthusiastically. So out of sorts, came a new Dinah, a new leader, and a new honor to the Negro race.

VI

'BENEZER BROUGHT HIS BEST

'BENEZER sat down on the kitchen door-step to think it over. Yet when I say *kitchen* door-step, I mean front-door-step, too, and side-door-step and back-door-step and any other door-steps there might be in a house; for 'Benezer's house had only *one* door, so you can see what a very little house it must have been—just a poor little bit of a place, but full of love from the roof to the cellar, and 'Benezer knew only too well where the love came from first. That was the very reason why he was sitting on the front-door-step to think it over:— For love came from The House Around The Corner; The House Around The Corner came from the Christians; and the Christians came from God. It was all as plain as day. And nobody knew better than 'Benezer that if there weren't love and there weren't God and there weren't a House Around The Corner, then life would be hardly worth living in this big lonely new town where trucks rumbled at you and street cars clanged at you and autos whizzed at you—but all of them passed you by.

For what did one little black boy more or less matter to *them*? They rumbled and clanged and whizzed on their own busy errands, and that one little shy black

boy stood on the curb and felt as unimportant as a speck of dust.

At least that was the way it had been until the wonderful day when he had noticed something waving at him out of a window. He could not be quite sure whether it was really waving at *him*, or not, but he thought he might as well be on the safe side, so he waved back. And there was an even jollier waving from the window; so 'Benezer went one better himself, and did a regular windmill performance, wondering who in all this big city had suddenly become so interested in him. But although he stood on tiptoe, he simply—could—not—see—who—it—was.

Then a man came along, and thought it such a jolly sight to see 'Benezer being a windmill on the curb that he stopped and said: "What kind of a game is this?"

'Benezer grinned: "'Tain't presactly a *game*, but I'se got a friend up in that window, see? And he waves at me, so then I wave at him, and we jess got going harder and harder and harder. But he's the shyest friend I eber did see! He don't show his face even once."

The man looked where 'Benezer pointed and he discovered that the friend was simply a muslin curtain fluttering in the breeze. But it would never do to tell 'Benezer that his friend was a curtain, so he said something far nicer: "I belong in that house, and what's more, *you* belong in that house,—but I've never seen you there, so why don't you come in?"

'Benezer could hardly believe his ears: "I 'spect I'se anudder li'l boy entirely from the li'l boy you *thinks*

I is!" he sighed, "my name's Ebenezer, and I nebber in all my born days was in no such big grandiferous house! Nebber!"

The man laughed: "Maybe you never *were* in it, yet it's specially for a colored boy exactly your size and age, so suppose we step inside and I'll show you what fun it is to have a house like this unexpectedly belonging to you."

I think that Center seemed to 'Benezer like having a dream come true—for he discovered one room with Negro boys playing crokinole; another room with Negro boys hammering nails and sawing wood, making furniture; another room where boys were waiting for this very gentleman to tell them a story. Never had 'Benezer felt so much at home. So that from that day to this, he and his entire family think there's no place in the world like that House Around The Corner and no man like the one in charge of the Center.

But . . . !

It seemed that there were other cities in America, with other colored boys, and *no* house around any corner where the very curtains waved "Come on in!" Therefore, with Thanksgiving so near, Mr. Missionary suggested that the boys and girls should each bring something to say a "Thank you" to the Saviour for their own Center which would help build another Center elsewhere, or help feed some other Negro family, or clothe someone shivering in the cold.

"For there's no doubt about it, boys, we're all shepherds of Kingdom Come, and we can lead people to the Saviour quickest when we treat them like friends.

But don't you go pestering your mothers for money or potatoes or fruit. Make it a secret gift, all your own, to thank God for all the things He has given *you*."

So 'Benezer sat on his kitchen door-step to think it over. In fact, he had been sitting there a long time. And before he sat down he had gone over every inch of that little home that had only one door-step; but besides being very, very little, it was also very, very *bare*! There really wasn't enough of anything to go around: there were not enough chairs in the daytime, or enough beds at night, or enough blankets; indeed, there weren't nearly enough clothes, either. So 'Benezer with all his thankfulness was having a desperately hard time trying to find *something* to give to the Saviour on Thanksgiving Day.

He kept wishing and wishing that he were *rich*, then he would bring a pearl of great price, like the little prince in the last fairy story they had told at the Center. "But land sakes," sighed 'Benezer, "I reckon there ain't no pearls in this here house. Leastways, I nebber laid *my* eyes on them."

But there he was wrong, for not half an hour later he looked in a cracked mirror over the kitchen sink and there he saw a pearl. Indeed he did! To be sure, it was rather a queer pearl, fastened in rather a queer place; fastened so firmly, in fact, that 'Benezer had to wriggle it and wriggle it and wriggle it before it began to feel at all loose. Then very patiently he worked it back and forth, and round and round, until it felt a trifle looser. Then he went and asked his father to pull it. His father naturally asked several leading

questions: Why *this* and why *that*? But 'Benezer said it was a secret; but did his father think he could pull it entirely loose for him?

"Yes, but I reckon mebber it'll hurt you a whole heap, 'Benezer."

"Nebber mind the *hurts*," said the brave 'Benezer. So his father pulled as hard as he could; and that is how it happened that 'Benezer was able to go to the Center on Thanksgiving morning with a pearl in his trousers' pockets.

The Center was buzzing with other boys and girls who had brought their Thank You gifts. They were piled on a big table, and everyone was showing everyone else what they brought.

"Reckon you nebber did see apples as reddy red as mine!" "Nor pumpkins as yaller as mine!" "And jess look at 'taters I brung." "I earned twenty-five cents by toting packages all afternoon." "Mammy said I dast fetch a can o' tomattys."

Oh, it was a wonderful morning and a wonderful sight, and the man was as delighted as the children until he suddenly discovered that something unpleasant was happening to poor 'Benezer. Some of the girls were tittering and some of the boys were pointing their fingers scornfully.

"'Benezer claims he brung a *pearl*, but I reckon you nebber did see a pearl like 'Benezer's in all your born days!"

"That ain't no *pearl*! Why that's nuffin but a *tooth*."

"Tee-hee! Just a ordinary ebberyday front tooth. Tee-hee! Tee-hee!"

But the man took this pearl that was only a tooth, and no sooner had he seen it than he knew it was far from being ordinary, so he asked 'Benezer to come into his office and—by questioning—heard the whole story: First, how 'Benezer had gone to the grocer and offered to do odd chores. But the grocer had said: "What do I want with a no-account Negro boy! Get out of here quick!" So he got out quick and went to the butcher, but the butcher had no errands either. Then he tried the baker, and the baker—although a gentle fellow—found he had no errands; so 'Benezer tried the drug store and hardware store and the paint shop, he tried the dry goods store and the plumber's establishment and the florist's. He tried doctors and dentists and lawyers and ministers. He offered to weed lawns and cut grass and wash windows and chop wood. But there never was a time when nobody needed anything done as little as on the day before Thanksgiving. Yet here was 'Benezer feeling thankfuller and thankfuller for the Center.

"So when I was clean tuckered out I recollected how you done tell about that prince giving a pearl of great price, and I kept right on recollecting how that dentist feller done tell us onct how teeth are as precious as pearls. So I done got my pappy to yank one loose. I dunno whether the Saviour's going to be able to *use* a tooth, though. But it's an awful *good* tooth. All shiny white, see, like a sure enough pearl."

The man looked at it again, and from the way he

handled it you might have thought it really was the most precious jewel in town. "Didn't it hurt to have it pulled out?"

"Yes indeedy! 'Cause why that there tooth weren't really ready for coming out yet. Stuck in so drefful tight. 'Pears like God might jess recollect the *hurt* even if He ain't got no other use for a tooth."

"I think He may have a really wonderful use for this tooth," the man said gently.

And God did, I think. For a certain lady, whose little son had died a year before, heard about this tooth that longed to be a pearl, and in memory of her little son she sent a big sum of money to the mission board to be used for building a new Negro center somewhere. So that when the following Friday's story hour came round the man asked to speak for ten minutes, please, and the Story-Teller said: "Yes, indeed, as long as you like, what do you want to tell us about?"

"Teeth!" said the missionary, "For maybe some of you do not know that a snail—just an ordinary tiny little snail—has about *fourteen thousand* teeth. Think of that! But a great big elephant never has more than *eight*, and a monster whale has only *two*. But a certain small boy I know had a tooth which looked like a pearl, and lo! it turned into a pearl of great price, for it's going to dig a cellar and put up a roof and make a doorway for a new Christian Center somewhere. And although even the mission board does not know that they owe that sum of money to the tooth that looked like a pearl, I wanted to whisper the secret to *you*, so that none of you will ever forget

that in giving a gift to the Saviour—*give your best!*
He always has a way to use it.”

And I think 'Benezer was the happiest little black shepherd of Kingdom Come in America that day!

VII

HOW CINDERELLA LOST HER CINDER

CINDERELLA poked the cinders—oh, thank goodness, there was still one tiny little ember burning yet. She put small wads of paper on that bit of fire and blew it frantically into a little blaze; then ran outdoors to gather coal and sticks from the railroad tracks. Hurrying back she fed her feeble flickering blaze, she fanned it gingerly until small orange tongues of flame licked up the wood and broke into a cheerful fire, snapping and crackling. Then she sat back on her heels to watch it, but curiously enough she never guessed she was a fairy-story sort of Cinderella as she gazed into her hearth and dreamed in homesick fashion of the good old days gone by when she lived way down south in Dixie, where the sky was always sunny and the air was always warm and the neighbor-folks were friendly, and where—if you were hungry—there were always sweet potatoes roasting on the hearth and peanuts on the vine outside the door. Ah me! It was not so at present. No indeed. Everything was different now. Quite different. Sadly so. And she shivered at the chill October weather, leaning nearer to her feebly crackling fire. Poor little Ella in the cinders—what-ever does she dream about so sadly?

Oh, she is dreaming of a time down south in Dixie

when everybody envied Ella and Bella and Della: she remembers how the three of them went strutting proudly past the less important Negro children who were not going north to live forever-and-a-day; she remembers all the lovely yarns they spun about the wonders that awaited them up north.

"Oh, yes indeedy," Ella would be saying a dozen times a day, "I reckon that up north we-all will sure wear shoes, why even no-count folks wears shoes up north; 'deed they does!" And she would roll her great black eyes around excitedly and wriggle her ten bare toes in anticipation of the day when they would be encased in leather for the very first time in their lives!

As for Bella, who was two years older, her boastings were of *hats*; almost any time of day or night you could hear her soft husky voice drawling in a new bored fashion: "'Pears lak I jess can't stand to see another lady wearin' a bandanna hanky knotted round her head,—up north I reckon de fust thing we-all will do is buy us hats. Yes'm, with red and purple flowers. Um 'm 'm!"

And "Um 'm 'm!" her envious audience would hum in echo; wishing they too were going north where Ella would be wearing shoes and Bella wearing hats and Della carrying school-books. (For Della was the only one that aimed to "get an Education!") It would be fun to tell you of the long good-byes they said in that sleepy old plantation village, or how they nearly died of fright and pride and joy when they stepped into the railroad train after a long drive by wagon to the nearest

town. They had not dreamed that trains would snort so terrifically up in front, or lurch and rattle so furiously in the middle as they rushed you through green fields up north to all the wonder places of the world.

To Ella and Bella and Della, that trip was one long magic fairy story coming true; but at their journey's end I hate to tell what rude awakenings they had. For everything went wrong. The weather was so icy cold, and the first snow of the season sifted idly down from heaven and froze their poor black noses and nipped their poor black toes. Ella's dearest wish came true and she wore *shoes*, but alas, the leather pinched unmercifully and she hobbled in real pain with no one to admire their shiny newness: since all the world up north wears shoes as a matter of course! If the weather was gloomy and chilly you can imagine how anxiously they looked through the streets of that town for a house. But it was a queer unpleasant thing to find day after day that no one wished to rent a house to homeless black families. And the rents were mountain high! Poor Mammy Chloe wagged her sad black head from side to side forlornly: "'Pears lak we done should haf stayed down souf in Dixie," whereupon Ella and Bella and Della groaned in misery. As for their father and their brothers, they, too, were wretched in this town where homes and work and friendliness were scarce indeed. Nobody seemed to care. *Nobody!* The whole town rushed by in autos or in street-cars, or rushed by on foot; but what was one new Negro family more or less, their careless glances seemed to say. One poor sad Negro family

who were hungry and homeless with no place to lay their heads until the day when they found an empty shack down by the railroad track—just a ramshackle shanty of a place, but in they moved and called it “home.”

Bella and Della found work in a laundry, the boys worked for a coal company, Mrs. Tully did cleaning by the day—in fact only little Ella was ever left behind among the cinders to keep house and cook and dream forlornly of the sunny care-free days down south in Dixie. She never dreamed she was a Cinderella sort of person, with a fairy tale in store! She only knew how cold she was, and when the trains roared by along the railroad track she always shivered miserably and thought they sounded like inhuman monsters,—until the day when she discovered that if you searched long enough beside the tracks you could fill a basket with the bits of coal dropped from the snorting engines. This was the first free friendly thing she met in all our wintry north!

But one never-to-be-forgotten day, Bella and Della came home from their laundry in evident excitement.

“I reckon it’ll be a right smart party,” drawled Della “but I declare to goodness, Bella, whatever am we gwine to wear?”

Bella shook her head forlornly: “Dunno! I ’spect Mammy Chloe won’t leave us spend a penny—.”

“’Deed I *won’t*,” said Mammy Chloe, “ain’t we got seben hungry stomachs to be filled three times a day? What for you aimin’ to spend money for, you no-count gals?”

"Oh Mammy Chloe," begged Bella anxiously, "don't you go squashin' me and Della, for I reckon the norf ain't gwine to be so powerful col' as we-all been thinkin'—for today don't a fine white lady sweep into the laundry and gib us a right warm welcome to a party in the house next door to the laundry. Yes ma'am, and that lady am a Christian lady, and that house am a Christian house specially for gals like me and Della. So up we speaks and says how we-all am Christians, too; and she am more friendlier than ebber."

Mammy Chloe chuckled and beamed! "Do tell! O praise the Lord, He sure am good to my Bella and Della; and, honey chile, you and Della gwine to have some pennies for fine clothes. You jess wait and see!"

And meanwhile, who do you suppose was cooking supper, kneeling in the cinders and hearing all this talk while her heart was as heavy as lead? Who but our own small Cinderella?

"Ain't I invited, too?" she asked timidly.

"O laws!" laughed Della.

"Shucks, Ella," said Bella, "you ain't nuffin but a little no-count gal; I reckon the mostest party *you'll* ebber get am gwine to be seein' me and Della all rigged up."

Ella spilt two hot salt tears into the kettle and prayed long and hard that night! "Oh Lord, ain't You-all ebber gwine to let me be noticed like Bella and Della? Oh Lord, I'se a drefful little no-count gal, but can't You-all git me to that party somehow or other? Amen."

And she fully thought God paid no least attention

to her prayer; for the great eventful evening came. Bella and Della were gorgeous in bright new waists and doused with the most fragrant cologne you ever smelled. Poor Ella sniffed the fragrance forlornly long after they had left the shack for the party, and she sat down among the cinders on the hearth and wept, exactly as a Cinderella should, little knowing that a pumpkin and a fairy godmother were even then upon their way to rescue her.

Rat-a-tat-tat on the door!

"Goody gracious!" started Mammy Chloe, and went over to open it.

"Does Bella Tully's sister Ella live here?" asked a voice, and a lady came inside. Oh, a regular fairy godmother of a person she was, it was plain to be seen.

Ella nodded her head, too tongue-tied to speak.

"Then, my dear, we've come to take you to our Hallowe'en party at the Center. Bella and Della arrived rather early and I was asking them about where they lived and who was in the family when I learned about *you*. And my dear, we just can't have a party without you, so do come along with me now, won't you? This little girl with the pumpkin is Sally Snyder."

"Sakes alive!" sighed Ella, wondering if this was just a dream rising out of the cinders. But the Jack O'Lantern seemed to wink a saucy eye at her, and she knew she was awake. Too much awake, alas, for she groaned: "I'd admire to go, but Bella and Della they doused ebbery drop of that there pairfume on

their own selves, and I ain't got no party clothes, either. I'se too drefful sooty and shabby——”

“Nonsense,” smiled the lady, “let me tell you something, Ella,—the minute I get better acquainted with Bella and Della I shall tell them that such gay clothes and such cheap cologne are in very poor taste. Also Sally and I knew you wouldn't be ready to come to a party, so we want you to be a *ghost*. See, we brought a sheet to drape you in—like this, with a white mask over your face. And you must say ‘Ough—ough!’ in a deep groaning way to scare everybody—I think it will be a great fun, don't you?”

Ella rolled her big black eyes excitedly, and went skipping down the street hand-in-hand with Sally Snyder. Beside the shanty door Mammy Chloe said to the lady from the Center: “I'se powerful 'bliged to you for all your goodness to my chilluns. I reckon the Lord's gwine to make the norf a fine place for the Tullies to live in, lady.”

“I reckon He is,” said the missionary, “and I'm sure of this, Mrs. Tully, that I'm going to help!”

“Praise the Lord!” sighed Mammy Chloe, happily.

VIII

ODE TO A WATER LILY

THEY always look so peaceful—water lilies—floating around on their little green lily pads, for all the world as if marooned on some desert island—*desert island?*

“But yes, honorably yes!” Water Lily nodded eagerly. “That makes it for me; all the same as on desert island, me!” And little tea roses of excitement began to bloom on her dear yellow cheeks, so that you could not help wondering how she, of all people, found anything of a desert island in her life, for weren’t boarding schools boarding schools? Which meant dozens of other pupils always around, didn’t it? But Water Lily sighed: “Alone, I would not know school for desert islands, maybe; but so many others making jolly make me one desert island of lonely, see?”

You did not quite see, and so you began to watch, look, listen. It did not take long to discover what was wrong. Perhaps she was too quaint, too different, too polite, too hungry for the attention which nobody troubled to pay her. There would be whisperings about her, even snickerings, and strange tales told. You hated them! “I don’t believe those stories,” you would blurt out furiously. “She’s too lovely. She’s like some exquisite Chinese doll, so fragile and dainty

and *precious!* I don't believe in all America there's any one as cunning as she is, and I don't believe one of the things you've told about her. They just couldn't be true."

"Oh, but they are!" every one hastened to say. "Mother told me." "Father read it in the paper—the newspapers were *full* of it!" "Mother said I'd better let her *alone*." "Some of the parents wanted to protest against her being put here in school!" "You see, there was a dreadful time over getting her back into America. She was born here, but her father had taken her back to China." "He *sold* her, you know, for \$8!" "That doesn't sound very precious, does it?" "Her father was a dreadful person." "They say her mother was lovely." "The lady that kidnapped her is awfully rich, and is sending her through school." "It's romantic, of course, but she's so queer!" "And the things the papers told. Mercy on us!"

You began hating newspapers. "She's a dear, and as pretty as a picture."

"Pretty? She? With those bias eyes and those high cheek bones and that jet-black hair, and pajamas in the day-time!"

Well, you began to be sorrier and sorrier; and "curiouser and curiouser," as Alice in Wonderland says. For it must be a horrid experience to be stranded in a strange boarding school in a strange land, with everybody turning a cold shoulder on you. Yes, indeed, a regular arctic desert island, chilly and desolate and forlorn.

But just as you were wondering what you could

do about it, Water Lily herself did something which seemed at the time most unfortunate, for she came down with Scarlet Fever. That meant the school infirmary and isolation and quarantine for at least six weeks. Everybody said: "Where do you suppose she caught it?" Or "Dear me, I'm glad I've not been near her or I might catch it myself. How I'd hate to be cooped up in that infirmary! They say she hasn't at all a bad case, but think how endless six weeks there could seem!"

Endless. Yes! One day like a thousand years. Just staring at the ceiling. Counting the cracks. Watching the sunlight travel slowly across from wall to wall. Hearing doors slam somewhere. Hearing gay voices somewhere. Hour after hour. Day after day. Week after week. If only somebody else would get Scarlet Fever, too, she kept thinking, somebody who could lie in the next little bed and chat over. She began praying about it. "Now please, honorably God, please to making a send of this Red Fever into some girl today. Now, yes, please, honorably God. Not too bad, not too aching bad, just a little bit bad, so she should coming lie in little bed next by me. Now is it so too much for making ask, please, God?"

Evidently it was. For nobody came, and the next day followed the next day, endlessly.

One day in class meeting the treasurer stood up: "Madam President, I've got a report to make. Don't faint, girls! But there's actually a dollar and nine cents in the treasury. I've added everything fifty times over to see if it's wrong, and it isn't, and it's

there. Isn't it thrilling? So what shall we do about it, anyhow?"

"Oh, let's spend it," every one cried gleefully.

"But how?" asked Madam President, clapping her hands on her puzzled brow. For whoever heard of one dollar and nine cents waiting around aimlessly in the treasury aching to be spent? Everyone else held a puzzled brow in like fashion; you could fairly hear the wheels go around. Now what? How? Where?

"If only somebody would fall sick," giggled the secretary, hopefully looking around at all the very well class, "we'd send you flowers!"

"Why, there's Water Lily," somebody said.

Of course. Water Lily. All these weeks in that dull infirmary.

"Shall we send her flowers?"

"But why not?"

"All right then, girls, is it a motion? Thank you. All in favor say 'yes.'"

"Yes," said a chorus of voices.

"Opposed, 'no.' Mercy, what silence. Well, it's carried then. So I'll appoint Barby Dillingham to be chairman of the flower committee. Will you want some one to serve with you?"

"My goodness, yes, Madam President, I never——"

"All right, then June, you and Patty and Nobs might as well be on it too. And if there's no other business let's stand adjourned, for that fudge is burning."

Which just shows you what a magic thing one dollar and nine cents really is, for what else could ever

have started those four particular girls thinking Chinese and talking Chinese? When once they got into the florist's shop one dollar and nine cents wasn't very much money. The florist was quite apologetic about it. "I'm sorry, but that would be \$2," or "This would be \$4." Finally, tapping his teeth with a pencil, he said: "Would you consider water lilies floating around in a little green bowl? If it's for a sick room they are quite jolly to watch—they go to sleep by night, and wake up in the morning!"

Four heads nodded eagerly. "Oh, yes! For her *name's* Water Lily," they gasped. It was too good to be true.

"Fine," he agreed. "You'll want to write out a card, so I'll fix things up for you."

They had not thought about a card, and never having done it before, nobody knew what to say. But when they put their four cards together each of the separate ideas were copied on one card: "Water lilies to a Water Lily." "Get well soon, for we miss you around a lot." "This is from all our class." "We voted to do it today at our monthly meeting."

You wouldn't have supposed it could be an upsetting card, with such stiff and obvious sentences. But to that little stranded Water Lily in her desert island of a bed it was the most unbelievable friendly card in all America. She read it over a dozen times—"*Water lilies to a Water Lily.*" Wasn't that adorably clever of them? She kissed the card. She cried over it. She tucked it under her pillow for safety, then drew it out to be sure it was there. Dear, unbelievable card.

It was like a ticket of admission to the house of friendship. "Come in! You belong!" it seemed to say.

She could sit up in bed by this time and was allowed to write, so she spent hours and hours and hours making up a reply. Nothing was quite good enough. Nothing was quite polite enough. Oh, if only she knew English better.

"Water Lily she making you all one very big nice Thank You over water lilies. They making happiness flowers blooming all over sick me, on the heads, on the eyes, on the hearts, on the everywhere. Water lilies making real true picture of this here Water Lily, honorably listen how. You pink persons not always having a know how the yellow person do got live. Now as for me it making this here story.

"Seeing lovely pond? Yes? All silent still like looking glasses. Green trees could bending over seeing shapes in water. Pink persons could bending over seeing own smilingness. Floating on that pond one so little water lily, yellow heart inside, me! Seeing, you like. But you not knowing all true story yet. Seeing only top lily floating, you like. But lily she saying: 'Better you go feeling down, down, down my stem till my root are.' So you go feeling that long, long feel down. Now on top pond making smoothness of nice clean water, but feeling down, down, down you making a feel of slime not so nice, and down alongside the root, ugh! much oozes and muds and very disgust horrid. You making big loud speech from surprises: 'Now how coming this pretty from out scums and oozes and bad muds?' So I making a secrets with you—*God, He*

can doing that! Sure. Just as easy. Sun know something hiding down in oozes, so sun drawing up and up and up that lily stem. All the same as God He drawing me. Sure.

"Once very bad papa making sells of his child for money. Me! Put me in places dark as bad oozes. Ugh! But God He drawing me up and up to lovely clean places called America. Me floating there all the same as on little desert island in middles of ponds. Pink persons named American are make a walk past on shore leaning over for see own self. Sometime they liking lonely lily? Yes. They doing this loveliness present over me, so I not lone now but sending big Thank You."

The class secretary read this aloud to the class. And it hurt. It hurt a lot.

But nobody really said much. One by one they borrowed the letter to read it over quietly. Girls began calling other girls Pink Persons with special little looks of affection: "After all, we aren't really a *white* race, are we?"

Water Lily got well. She emerged from her desert island. She expected friendship. She radiated it from her own little tea rose face, and she received it. Shyly. Heaps of it. So that she hardly had arms enough or necks enough or waists enough. It was astonishing how one funny little letter had changed everything. Nobody had meant to change a thing. It was just a way of using up an extra one dollar and nine cents—
But!

Then came Vocation Day, when, just before the

school "Annual" went to press every one had to hand in on paper the thing she hoped to be doing some fine day. The funnier the better, so that both wild and tame careers were printed; but Water Lily took it quite seriously and among the lists of "Want to be married," "Want to be stenographer to Giant on 19th floor of office building," appeared this:

OWED TO A WATER LILY!

"Always because of beautifully lily sent sick me I should wanting spend long, long life making friendliness on Americans from Atlantic to Pacific Ocean, but cannot do, for must go backing China. Maybe making teach very little yellow persons how make read write arithmetic. 70,000,000 little Chinese childrens big ready enough for schoolings, but no school only for 2,000,000. Much sorry over this many millions schoolless so maybe should making teach; me. Yes?

"China very too full sickness also. Many many no can using eyes, ears, legs, arms, lungs or body. More nurses more doctors always should be and aren't. Maybe making less sickness should be vocation, me. Yes?

"China very too full idols. Wood. Stone. Making big for temple, making little for home. Many, many sadly Chinese people's making a worship on big idol, little idols and no getting helps. Very sadly inside wanting really God.

"Please telling me what should do and obligingly me, Water Lily."

You can see for yourself what a real little person she was, all heart, all soul, loving God and loving everybody.

“Let’s have a Water Lily Club,” became a school inspiration. “Let’s have the dues one dollar and nine cents, and use them to help Water Lily carry out her three vocations before she is ready to carry them out over there herself!”

Water Lily nodded her head wisely: “It is no jokes what that poems says—

*‘Down in the mud and scum of things
Something always, always sings.’”*

IX

SALLY SEES IT THROUGH

I—THE GIRL WHO FELL THROUGH, VIA AMERICA!

IT WAS the Saturday before Easter and Sally was trimming her Easter bonnet when Nancy burst into the room. "How do you do, Miss Samantha Arabella Jemima Montmorency! No, I can't sit down, beloved, but I wondered, now please don't laugh—but I wondered if you wouldn't like to fall through the earth today?"

Sally laid down her sewing in utter surprise. "Why Nancy, you're simply *crazy!*"

Nancy chuckled. "Not a bit of it, poor old dear. But I know a perfectly safe way you can fall through painlessly into China—or anywhere else, for that matter, all for one dollar."

"Oh," said Sally, "it's something to buy, is it? A tube to run through the earth, or a well-digger, or something like that, I suppose?"

Sally looked prim and full of secrets. "I can't tell you—yet; although I can state that it's sharper than a two-edged sword, it's more precious than rubies, it's a lamp for wandering feet and bread for the hungry. So hand over your dollar, darlint!"

Sally protested. "But Nancy, no one thing can be all that and cost only a dollar."

Nancy laughed. "Oh, as for that, a dollar buys two of them. Yes—two! Or if you want to buy parts, you can get twenty-five little bits of it bound separately for a dollar."

"Nancy, you're ro— mancy!" Sally cried, both mystified and provoked. "I'm too poor around Easter time to waste a dollar on anything so fabulous."

Nancy waxed enthusiastic. "Oh, but we want you to fall through the earth especially because it is Easter, my dear. It's the time of all times to fall. With a thud! With a bang! You'll love it! For Easter would never be Easter without this special thing. So give me your dollar like a dear little Christian."

"Tell me what it's to buy," demanded Sally.

"Not till I see the green of your dollar bill in my little pink palm; and let me add that not only has this special thing brought Easter to your home and to my home, but its built all the hospitals and orphanages and asylums, and its done more to rule the world than kings or guns or warships or submarines."

Sally laid down a crinkly bill. "There's your dollar, you bad old beggar. Now tell me the mystery."

Nancy grabbed the bill and dashed to the door. "You'll hear tomorrow in Sunday-school, darlint; but I thought as long as you didn't believe in missions I'd rouse your curiosity beforehand, for you'll find it the most irresistible, fascinating, captivating, satisfying, wonderful thing you ever, ever did. And, by the way, do you prefer falling through in two parts, or in twenty-five little bits of parts?"

Sally's cheeks were aflame. "In two parts, if you

please!" she said with dignity, "and if I find you've hoodwinked me, you naughty Nancy, I'll never speak to you again. For I don't believe in throwing dollars through the earth recklessly."

"But you'll approve on Easter Sunday," Nancy said solemnly.

And Sally did! After she heard what just one-half of her dollar did for

II—THE GIRL WHO FELL THROUGH THE EARTH, VIA CHINA!

This is the way her story goes:

"You knock-kneed big-footed clumsy Mow Fah Din, you're burning that pot!" exclaimed the Chinese grandmother crossly.

"Oh no, most glorious and venerable one," answered Mow Fah Din, meekly, "it is only the smell of the rice you notice."

"What's that? What's that? Bah, you talk like a tea-pot, and you'll never get a mother-in-law if you mumble so indistinctly. Speak up now, and tell me what that queer white thing is over in the corner. Speak up, you tongue-tied little idiot!"

Mow Fah Din walked over and shouted into her grandmother's ear, "That's the package with the two books inside which the Foreign Lady left; don't you remember?"

Granny boxed the child's ears. "You saucy piece of baggage, of course I don't remember, or why should I ask about it? Bring it over here at once and show

me. What do women want with books—does that white foreign devil suppose we can *read*?”

Mow Fah Din laid the package at her grandmother's feet, opened it, and held up two Bibles. “Here they are, venerably aged. One for our clan, and one for the Mings. I promised to take theirs to them.”

Granny handled her copy curiously. “What perfect nonsense a book is, all these things that look like flies' legs and black threads. But tell me, you idiot child, what is that strange picture on the paper?”

Mow Fah Din held up the wrapping paper, and the two of them examined it curiously. What did it represent—those colored patches within a great black circle? For I ask you—how was an ignorant Chinese family to know a map of the world when they saw one, never having had lessons in reading or geography?

Granny stared at it, fascinated. “Well, you empty-headed little toad!” she cried, “Why don't you tell me what it's a picture of?”

Mow Fah Din made a quaint little curtsy, “Oh, most wise and venerable, I leave it to your wisdom! What does it look like to you?”

Granny put her head one one side, very critically. “It doesn't look like anything much. These Americans are poor artists. But I have it! I have it! It's a picture of fruit on a round plate!”

Mow Fah Din jumped with delight. “Oh, of course, of course! See, this is a pear” (and she pointed to South America) “while this is a—a—a—” but her hand pointed doubtfully at Africa.

"Well, speak up, smarty!" said Granny, querulously. "What is it?"

"Maybe it's an ear," said poor Mow Fah Din.

Granny snorted. "What a miserable artist! Fancy painting a pear and an ear on the same plate. And I suppose all that stuff at the top is grapes,"—she swept a scornful hand over Europe with its little many-colored countries.

But Mow Fah Din suddenly said, in an awe-struck tone, "Oh, venerable old lady, look—it is the picture of a face, and not a plate. See, here is the nose in the middle, pink" (Florida, this was); "these are the ears" (Africa and South America, of course), "and this is the hair" (Europe and North America). "But there's no mouth, is there?"

Granny shuddered. "Mow Fah Din," she said solemnly, "it is not a man; it is the picture of the American's God. Didn't that white foreign woman especially say that she had come to bring us the one true God? Well, here he is! Put him up by the stove where our old paper kitchen god is; maybe he will protect our rice bowls, too. Put him up, I say!"

Mow Fah Din obediently fastened the piece of wrapping paper over the stove, while Granny groaned, "What a curious god—to have no mouth."

"At least he can't tell anything bad about us to the other gods," ventured Mow Fah Din hopefully.

"That is true," assented Granny. "And now, offer him some rice—quickly, quickly, you slow provoking atom of clumsiness.

Mow Fah Din scooped a little rice from the pot

into a small red bowl, then kneeling, she reverently bumped her head to the floor three times as she prayed, "Oh, idol of the foreign woman, protect our hearth, and condescend to be pleased to linger under our unworthy roof-tree."

Granny nodded approvingly, and then, in order to impress him properly, she moaned feebly, "I ought to be kneeling, too, of course, but alas! alas! my miserable back is too stiff for bending. Too stiff! Come over here, stupid girl, tell me, where are his eyes?"

Mow Fah Din looked in vain. "He doesn't seem to have eyes, augustly aged one," she said, "unless these are eyes," and she pointed to the Great Lakes and the Mediterranean Sea.

Granny sighed peevishly. "I don't like it; I thought gods were so eaten up with spiteful curiosity that they spied on mortals all day long. A god without eyes is petrifying to me; you must fetch this foreign devil woman at once; we must learn how to worship her god properly. He's dangerous to have in the house, eye-less and mouth-less. Well, are you going, you stupid slow-poke? Hurry, hurry!"

It was in answer to this call that our missionary was called to the home of the Wings, where nobody had ever welcomed her before. But, instead of talking about God, she cleverly explained the map of God's earth to them—how everyone of those bright-colored patches were great countries, about which she told them. This was America, for instance, full of white-faced Christian people who worship the one true God,

and this was China, full of yellow-faced people, many of whom worship idols until they hear of the one true God, when they are so glad to worship Him. This blue part of the map was all water, blue sparkling water—thousands of miles of it, which the Lord God made when He created the earth in the beginning. Whereupon she took Granny's new Bible and from the very first page, " 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth?' And so, I ask you, venerable lady, if God made everything and everybody, surely He is the God to worship, isn't He?"

Granny grunted. This might or might not be true, but the map seemed real enough, and she laid her crooked yellow finger on various spots and demanded to be told what those particular places looked like. So the missionary told of New York and Naples, of Paris and Peking, of Boston and Bombay, of deserts and ice and volcanoes. In every city she made special mention of churches where men met to worship the one true God, just such a church as the new one in this very Chinese town of theirs; and the missionary told of wonders such as street cars and skyscrapers and wireless invented only by persons in Christian lands. Granny was spellbound by this amazing flow of wonders, and the uncles, aunts, grandchildren and servants came flocking from all the parts of the house. Again and again the missionary lady was invited to drink tea and to tell new stories about places on the map, until slowly the idea crept into everybody's heart that the one particular little spot where their own village was located was becoming a curiously different

kind of place now that these Christians had come with their school and their church, their hospital and their nurses.

Then, tragedy of tragedies, there came a dusky evening when Mow Fah Din ran hastily into the dark room. How was she to know that the precious map was stretched between two chairs? All she knew was that when she fell there was a cracking, tearing sound as she crashed through the paper and found herself sprawling on the floor.

"Oh dear!" she cried. "Oh dear! I fell through the earth. I fell through the earth!"

Uncles and aunts came running in with lanterns.

"Oh, you clumsy crab! You big awkward idiot! Just look how you've fallen through the earth! Well, just you wait until the venerably aged one sees this unlucky misfortune, um'm'm! *Then* you'll get what's coming to you, you naughty girl."

Poor Mow Fah Din picked herself up and looked dismally at the torn map. She dreaded the tap! tap! tap! that meant the approach of Granny, hobbling into the room. Meekly she lowered her head and cringed against the wall.

Granny was met by a chorus of explanations from the disgusted uncles and aunts. She saw for herself the scattered fragments of map lying on the floor. Then she stared at the trembling Mow Fah Din, while everyone waited for the explosion. But Granny hobbled to her chair and said sarcastically, "Is this all you good-for-nothing grown-ups can find to do? Just stand and blame my littlest granddaughter for something

she cannot help? Bah, what is this silly map? Hasn't the white woman told us it was an advertisement of soap—just a cheap bit of paper compared with this heavenly Book of the one true God? Come near and I will tell you a secret—I that speak unto you, old and withered though I am—I have made that foreign woman *teach me to read!* Well, what do you think of that?"

Her astonished sons shouted admiringly, "Marvelous! What a surpassingly clever mother we have!"

"Overwhelmingly clever," said the spiteful daughter-in-laws.

"We are lost in admiration!" bleated all the meek relatives. And everybody bowed and bowed.

"Tut! Tut!" chuckled the old lady, delighted at this praise, "do not waste up the air in flighty compliments, for I can only read one character. Yet what other woman in our village can do even that? But it's the one bit of writing I was determined to see for myself in print, the name of the Lord God. See, this is how it looks! Funny hooks and curves of fly legs! So I'm going through our Bible marking His name every time it appears. I've marked and marked and marked, so you can see for yourselves how very important the Lord God is, for I've only just begun, yet on every page His name appears and appears, and even if I live to be a thousand I'll never be able to finish, for my eyes will grow too dim and my hands too feeble. But I think I'll teach one of you poor ignorant women to read, so that you can finish the

marking for me. . . . Now the question is, whom shall I teach?"

"Choose me!" screamed each daughter-in-law eagerly, grabbing the old lady's arms.

But Granny looked at the meek little Mow Fah Din. "Child," she said, "come over here and stand by me!"

How she trembled!

"Mow Fah Din, who first brought me the Christian's book?"

"Excuse me, honorably; I did!"

"Speak up! Speak up! Don't mumble your words! Who first knelt to worship the Christian's God, even though it was only the map by mistake?"

"Excuse me, honorably, I did!"

"That's right. Never mumble your words, my child. And who was it fell through the earth just now?"

Oh what an agonized twist of hands as Mow Fah Din bowed again: "Excuse me, honorably. I-I did!"

"What's that? What's that? Speak up, I didn't hear you."

"I did! *I* fell through the earth!"

"Then *you* deserve punishment; and the penalty is that you are the one I shall teach to read. Well, aren't you going to weep and wail?"

Just one funny little sound came out of Mow Fah Din: "O-oh!"

"What's that? What's that? Speak up louder?"

"O-oh, God has waked up little flowers of happiness in my heart already! I feel just like springtime after winter, honorable grandmother."

"That's the way to talk! Now come over here and I'll show you. . . ."

Can't you imagine Sally's delight at this story? She says now that the very best thing she *ever* did was to fall through the earth. But as for me, I hope she will keep right on falling and falling and falling.

X

BELINDA JANE IN SEARCH OF A MOTHER

FOR five years Belinda Jane had lived in a glass house. That was because she was especially beautiful, and especially talented, but she often found life in a glass house very dull and wished that somebody would adopt her, for she had never seemed to belong to anybody in particular. There was the Gentleman with the High Collar, for instance; apparently he owned everything in sight and yet his interest in Belinda Jane was hardly flattering. Almost any day he might come pacing past, then he would say: "Well, I see she's still with us, Miss Rooney?"

And Miss Rooney would answer politely: "Yes, sir; still here, sir."

Where else was there to go, pray tell? The glass house was quite comfortable, and Miss Rooney was very kind to her—straightening her ruffles, moving her arms around, and flicking the dust away, for even in glass houses there is bound to be a bit of dust and Belinda Jane always stayed so very still that anything coming her way really had to settle down on her. So, by the end of the fourth year, she began to look somewhat the worse for wear, with dust and soot and sunlight and handling. Miss Rooney approached the Gentleman with the High Collar: "You see, sir, her

dress is getting soiled, and she could do with a bath, I do think, so how about me washing her real gingerly, sir? She's been here all of four years now, and the dress is really out of style. Now a new one . . . you see, sir, ruffles aren't being worn this season."

The Gentleman with the High Collar glared at Belinda Jane: "She's been sort of a white elephant to us," he said. "Suppose instead of going to so much bother to get her cleaned up, you just reduce her and see what happens."

Secretly Belinda Jane was furious with the man. *She*—a white elephant? *Reduce* her? *Her*? For even in her retired life she had heard conversations about doing daily dozens and strict dieting; she wished harder than ever that someone going past the glass house might spy her and fall in love. She was aching for a mother. Indeed, one of the sad things about Belinda Jane's lot was the fact that the first word she had ever said had been, "Mamma!" without ever having anyone to whom to say it. You can see for yourself how she was needing someone to understand her. For Miss Rooney, with the best of intentions, had to do whatever the stiff unimaginative gentleman suggested; and presently in the front of the glass house there appeared a sign. Fortunately, Belinda Jane was too young to read, for she would have felt more discouraged than ever if she could have seen the rude words: "*Slightly Soiled. Two-thirds off. Special—This Week Only!*"

It was Miss Rooney's joke, that "This Week Only." For January became February, February became

March, spring became summer, and the sign was still there. Even when fall came, with its crisp air and its gay red leaves, Belinda Jane was still sitting in her glass house, staring idly at the back of the yellowing sign, longing for a mother.

And then, just when a mother seemed least likely to appear, behold an amazing delegation swooped down on Miss Rooney——

“Golden hair, please. In curls . . .”

“And if you only had one that could speak . . .”

“Eyes that open and shut, of course . . .”

“Oh, of course,” said Miss Rooney collectedly. You would have supposed she would be dreadfully flustered, so many demands from so many different persons, all at once. But, then, you don’t know Miss Rooney. With businesslike tact she asked only one question, “Had you figured out what you could afford?”

“Three dollars!” announced the delegation proudly, in a prompt chorus, and from the pockets of the treasurer sounded the delightful jingle of quarters clanking on dimes. This, quite evidently, was to be a cash transaction.

Miss Rooney made a noble gesture toward Belinda Jane: “Now here, by a streak of good luck, at the very price you wish to pay—reduced from nine dollars, too, and for this week only——”

“Oh!” giggled a voice. “Isn’t she too absolutely beautiful?”

Belinda Jane felt herself being lifted out of the glass house by Miss Rooney and was confused to find herself stared at by boys, by girls, by a young lady, by an

old lady, by Miss Rooney, even by the Gentleman with the High Collar. She stared solemnly at the noisy group, wondering which of these curiously assorted creatures was to adopt her.

"As mothers," she thought, "anyone would be entirely satisfactory, I'm sure." But this was hardly true; for deep down in her lonely heart she greatly preferred the Girl Who Never Said Much; she did so want just that special tender little look to be hers, always. Giggles might be jolly to live with, but lovingness was . . .

And then the impossible happened. The Boy with Red Hair said briskly: "Well, she's big enough and grand enough, and we've got the money, so why look any further?" Whereupon he actually began to fish down into his pockets, hauling up quarters and nickels and dimes at a terrific rate.

The matter seemed settled. With little clucks of agreement everyone watched the pile of money grow bigger, until Miss Rooney herself had counted it and said: "Just the right change. And I do thank you very much."

"Don't mention it," said the Boy with Red Hair, and seizing Belinda Jane around the waist, he tucked her under one arm and marched out the front door. The others were not nearly so efficient, they turned right about face more reluctantly, the Older Lady gasping, the Younger Lady smiling; Miss Rooney frankly opened her mouth wide in sheer surprise: "Well, I never! He didn't even give me time to fetch paper or string or anything!"

You can picture to yourself how Belinda Jane felt. Five sedate years in a quiet glass house, and then this rude treatment by a rough boy! Everything was all wrong, she hadn't expected to have a *father*—it was a mother she needed; she wanted to be crooned to, to be cuddled, to be loved. She protested so violently at this boy's horrid treatment (imagine, face downward under his arm, heels out behind!) that she couldn't resist a pathetic, "Mama!"

He was as proud as any parent you ever saw. "Now, what do you know about that?" he beamed to Main Street in general, and squeezed her more carefully than ever as he dashed through traffic to reach a certain automobile.

The chauffeur, who belonged to the Older Lady, said, "Well, I see you got her?"

"And isn't she a beaut? Why don't those others come? There isn't time to waste!"

Presently everyone had piled into the car, and it went gliding away. Belinda Jane had never had a ride before, but her heart was so heavy within her that she hardly saw a thing—monuments, policemen, city halls, churches, schools, more policemen—everything slid past her mournful eyes.

Then the automobile stopped in front of a big house with something jutting up on top of it. "Well, here's the church!" the Younger Lady announced, and everyone tumbled hastily out of the car. The Boy with Red Hair became more energetic than ever: "Well, now, let's hustle and get her right off today."

"Off?"

"Today?"

"But she isn't dressed!"

"She isn't ready!"

"Dressed? Ready?" cried he. "But, of course, she's ready. Isn't this ruffled thing a dress?"

The Girl with a Giggle giggled: "Maybe it was once, it's more like a wrapper now, and entirely out of style. It simply wouldn't do at all to travel in, for you know the folder warned us to send the messengers nicely dressed. *Specially* dressed. So we really couldn't send her off this way."

The Boy began to bluster; then the Girl Who Never Said Much said quietly: "She's frumpy, you can't love frumps so easily, and we do want her to be loved. She's such a wonderful messenger. I'd just love to have her live with me forever and ever!" And she gave Belinda Jane such a tight warm little squeeze that she couldn't resist crying tenderly, "Mama! Mama!" Whereupon everybody laughed, except the Girl Who Never Said Much, she kissed Belinda Jane, whispering secretly: "Thank you! oh, thank you a lot!"

Then there was such bustling and talking and planning and measuring that Belinda Jane, used to a quiet life and a glass house, nearly lost her head. Imagine not having had new clothes for five years and then to be measured for underclothes and outer clothes, coats, knickers, dresses, hats, shoes . . . Buzz, buzz, buzz, all afternoon . . . With the Younger Lady making wise suggestions and the Older Lady knowing how to cut this, that, or the other thing. Oh, it was an unbelievable day, until Belinda Jane, like the old woman

in the fairy tale, pinched herself saying, "Do this be really I?"

But that night, as she was left in quiet sleep, she kept puzzling her poor tired head: to whom did she belong, anyhow? Was she always going to be nobody's in particular? For although the Girl Who Never Said Much seemed to want her, she evidently knew there was no hope of it.

Then there came a day when dozens and dozens of boys and girls met at the church. They came early to get acquainted with her, and she thought she had never felt so banded about as that afternoon, everyone turning her this way and that to examine her—such buttoning and unbuttoning, such hooking and unhooking! But presently, some grown persons arrived; they sat in rows; things grew quieter; the dozens of children filed into a row of front chairs. Belinda Jane was escorted to a raised part of the room where she was given the chair of honor in the center. On each side of her sat those she knew best. The room was so still you could have heard a pin drop. The Older Lady stood up, she closed her eyes, she said: "Our Father who art in Heaven, we thank Thee for all the ways there are to serve Thee. We thank Thee especially that Thou dost still send swift messengers before Thy face to prepare a highway for our God. We thank Thee for this lovely little messenger of our very own, whom we are sending forth today to carry our message of peace and good will to some little unknown girl in faraway Japan. We like to remember that the little girl is not at all unknown to Thee—Thou dost know every thought she

ever had, Thou dost know every deed she ever did, Thou dost know every wish she ever made. Father, she is as precious in Thy sight as any child in this room, and so we bring to Thee our special prayer today: when she takes this messenger of ours into her arms, oh, grant that she may begin loving us as we love her, and may that love grow deeper and stronger each time she tells her Japanese neighbors the surprising story of her gift from the friendly children of America; until she on her side of the sea, and we on ours, may be fulfilling the beautiful commandment in Thy Book: '*Little children, love one another.*' And this we ask for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Then the Boy with Red Hair was introduced. He was terribly embarrassed and jammed his hands deep in his pockets. "I can't make a speech, but I'm the treasurer of this committee so I'll just tell you that as soon as our club heard of these messengers to Japan we decided to send one of our own. So we all pitched in to earn enough money. Some of the boys collected old magazines and newspapers to sell to the ragman, others raked leaves off people's lawns, planted bulbs and cleaned up cellars. The girls minded babies, did mending, washed dishes, painted place cards, and did other things girls are good for. So then we had enough money for the ticket and everything. So that's all."

The Younger Lady was introduced: "Over in Japan there are four million school girls between the ages of six and twelve, and it's to be left to their school teachers to choose the girls who are to receive an American ambassador. Now, of course, it would be wonderful

if four million messengers could go, so that every single girl could receive one. I'd like to show you eight ways in which it will be like lighting Japanese lanterns in every home where a messenger goes." She had eight big pieces of cardboard (each a different color) cut out in the shape of Japanese lanterns; across the lantern was printed one word, in each word the first letter was printed in red, double the size of the others. One by one she hung these in a row across the platform, as she explained what her eight words meant——

"The first lantern lighted, of course, would be (1) *Amazement*. Can't you fairly hear the Japanese girl crying: 'Oh, it's too good to be true—I! I! I! I've got a messenger? Who'd believe that I could ever have deserved this wonderful honor? Oh! Oh! Oh!' Then the second lantern would be (2) *Motherliness* toward the charming little newcomer, so very strange in American dress, so very precious and lovable. You know as well as I do what secret hugs there will be, what takings on and off of the amusing American clothes. And next will come (3) *Enthusiasm*, for everybody will be invited to inspect the marvels of the stranger—aunts and uncles, schoolmates and neighbors. Oh, what a clucking of Japanese tongues! What hands will stroke the American dresses and pat the American curls! Neighbor will tell neighbor, until the wonder of it will spread from street to street, even from town to town. And this enthusiasm can never altogether die down, because the fourth little lantern lighted will be (4) *Remembrance* of the messenger on every third of March for years and years and years to

come, just as fresh as on this third of March. Now all this excitement will be sure to light a new (5) *Interest* in America, and interest will lead to a new understanding, and understanding will lead to a sense of peace which will be written deep in the hearts of children. We can't help but hope that because it was Christian boys and girls in America who worked so hard to send the messengers that the Japanese children will begin to feel a bit of curiosity about (6) *Christianity*, which prompts unknown boys and girls to reach out such friendly hands across the sea; and this will light (7) *Affection* and affection will light (8) *Neighborliness*, between Japan and America. So I ask you—aren't these worthwhile lanterns? And what do the first red letters of each of the eight words spell?"

"*American!*" shouted the audience.

Then the Girl Who Never Said Much stood up: "We were asked to send a letter with our messenger, and I was chosen to write the note, so here it is:

"Dear Japanese Friend,

"Over here in America there is a Mission Club of twenty members who wish very much that they knew you and could shake hands with you. But since we can't come over ourselves we are sending you this dear little messenger, for we hope that when you hold her in your arms she can whisper to you all the secrets of our love for you and our great big wish that this particular third of March may be the happiest you've ever had in all your life. With hearts full of love for you, from your friends,

"The members of the ———
Mission Club.'"

Then the Boy with a Grin began to grin as he brought on the platform a set of steps; and the Girl with a Giggle put on a kimono, and kneeling, bumped her head on the floor very politely three times: "Honorable ones," she began, "for the next ten minutes you are in Japan, the date is the third of March, and as for me, I'm a Japanese girl getting ready to celebrate the annual Feast of Dolls. You have seen my august parent bring in the steps on which, for one day, our ancestral dolls are to be set up. On the other three hundred and sixty-four days these dolls lie safely in a big box in our storeroom, just as in other homes in Japan; but today every Japanese daughter is busy setting the dolls in rows in their proper order. On the top shelf, in the place of highest honor, see, I put the Emperor and the Empress doll, like this" and she propped up a most important-looking pair of dolls, dressed in gold paper, with crowns on their heads.

"Then on the lower steps I place other dolls which have been in our family for years and years. I take little lacquer cups and dishes to feed the dolls; indeed, all day long on the third of March, I have the most fascinating time pretending all sorts of things with the beautiful dolls. And now, oh honorable ones, you have sent this marvellous messenger of yours to take her place in my Feast of Dolls. Oh, I am so amazed at your thinking of me, so thrilled, so pleased. Every little daughter in our family for hundreds of years to come will hear this story and play with your present on every third of March. Oh, thank you! Thank you!"

Suddenly the entire committee began staring at the Girl Who Never Said Much: "Dear me, we almost forgot—you were to give Belinda Jane a new name, an *appropriate* name. What did you choose?"

The Girl Who Never Said Much looked very bashful: "It's a queer name—a dear name—yet maybe you won't like it. But I like it—a lot. You see, I'd liked to call her 'Merry Can,' because *merry* can do so much to make children friends the whole world round, now can't it? So I thought it would be nice for us always to remember that in 1926 our club really did put the merry in American!"

And everyone agreed. Especially Belinda Jane!

But the very best part of this story is that in every town there is a store with another Belinda Jane languishing forlornly in another glass show case, longing desperately for a mother. And over in Japan are those four million school girls, who, on the third of March, will be wishing just as desperately that some Belinda Jane could be theirs. So I leave it to you to look deep in your pockets to see if you can't find enough quarters simply aching to put "the doll in dollar" and the "merry in American." And whatever you do, never forget that American ends in—*I Can!*

XI

MISS COME-OVER SPINS US A DRESS

You could tell in a minute that it was a Fairy Story House from the queer slope of the gay red roof which made such a sharp, funny gable, under which the attic window panes seemed to be winking and blinking in a comical way as if to say: "Tut! Tut! We know what's so secret up here, even if you don't!" Evidently the Littlest Old Lady knew that secret, such a wee little old person, she, as if years upon years ago a fairy had waved a wand and said: "Stay just as you are, you Littlest Old Lady." And she had stayed. Which was fortunate, as she was quite the nicest person you ever saw in spite of the Ogre and Ogress thundering at her. For was there ever a tale like this complete without a villain and villainess stalking in? You used to hang over the fence and watch these important beings trying to lord it over your Littlest Old Lady.

"Gram," they would say, ever so loudly, "Gram, it's simply absurd of you to stay wedged in between tenements way down in this old corner of town. Everybody else has left, it's absurd for you alone to stick on and on. New England towns aren't what they used to be since the foreigners swarmed in on us. Some fine morning you'll be found murdered in bed by some of these fine new neighbors of yours."

"Dear me," chuckled the Littlest Old Lady gaily, "now *that's* a cheerful tale to tell your poor old granny the day before Thanksgiving. But think what a beautiful chance it gives me, darlings, to show what a bold, brave woman I really am, in spite of my paltry riches. For here I was born, and here I stay, neighbors or no neighbors. And if it's all the same to you, I'll just keep right on feeling quite safe in my bed. You see, they are all *my friends!*"

"You're hopeless!" shouted the Ogress.

"Foolish!" roared the Ogre. "We wash our hands of you, Gram."

Your Littlest Old Lady chuckled as they turned their backs and stalked down the front walk to their large shining car. You heard them saying: "She's nothing more nor less than a Mrs. Robinson Crusoe marooned on a desert island."

And away they sped down the street, and you dangled over the fence gazing wistfully at that dear little, queer little lady. Would her eyes be sharp enough to-day to see you there, half in and half out of her yard?

You loved it when her voice piped out gladly, "If it isn't the little Come-Over Child! Come nearer, do!"

You scampered noisily through the brown leaves. They sang a little tune at you, those leaves! It was at moments like these that you loved America, for at last her tune had turned beautiful. Before it had been the crash of trolley cars whizzing past, the jar of trucks, the jam of brakes, the jangle of horns, the jostling of busy persons. America was never music to you except near your Littlest Old Lady in her Fairy Story House;

then the very leaves of her oaks and her elms chanted little hymns at you. You tip-toed gingerly.

"Child," she said, "come nearer so I can see if you are really B. C. D. F. M. N. R. S. T. U. V. W. I. T. Z. herself!"

And at that you put back your head to giggle, for once upon a time, when first you reeled off your long foreign name which ended in "witz" she had gasped and said, "But that isn't a name! That's the alphabet with the vowels left out. Say it once more, little Miss Consonantz!"

But no matter how many times you said it, she kept right on loving the oddness of you. "Child," she would say, "you're a treasure. Tell me how you got so precious?"

You used to sit in that enchanted garden and tell your life story: all about when you lived over the big blue sea in your dear little far-away town with its rows of gay wooden houses and its rows of stiff prim trees; with its dances in the market-place when the fiddlers fell to fiddling and the dancers fell to clogging in their great big peasant boots. You made music of it as you told her. You swayed, you stamped your feet softly, you twanged imaginary strings, and the Littlest Old Lady said she could truly hear that music—sad and soft and wild. She would clap her fragile hands in rhythm until her rings tinkled in tune, "I see it! I hear it! The little painted houses and the Noah's Ark trees, and the fields lying white in the moonlight. Tell me more, you little Come-Over Child."

So on you went, really in that tiny garden, but pre-

tending you were miles upon miles away, spinning stories of the years that were lost. But today the old lady shivered. "It's cold in the garden, Come-Over Child. November is here and the sun may play tricks for an hour, but I'm not warm any longer. Let's go indoors and tiptoe upstairs to the attic. Maybe *she* won't know a thing about it this time."

You felt a little shivery yourself at this. For *she* was a startling person, as large as the Ogre plus the Ogress, but far more alarming because she lived with the Old Lady and would pop up in unexpected corners of the garden shouting, "Brat, begone! This is no public playground!"

But the Littlest Old Lady pretended not to be afraid at all: "She's only my housekeeper, little Come-Over Person, so I say to myself quite calmly, she's a step above the butler and two steps above the cook and three steps above the maid. She can't scare me. Say that to yourself."

Then you both tiptoed to the attic where those fascinating windows winked and blinked as if they harbored secrets. Now the truth of the matter is that never before had you actually reached the attic, for *She* had always heard you and sent you away. Politely to the Old Lady, "Madam, are you forgetting it is your hour for rest?" To you, between her teeth, "Brat, begone!"

An amazing woman! Off you flew, sliding down banisters and out the front door like a rocket.

But on this certain November day you both managed better. Step by step you softly climbed to that

mysterious attic—little creaks of fussy old stairs, breathless waiting to be sure that all was safe—and then at last the attic—all shadowy, with a curious musty smell such as Fairy Tale Houses ought to have. You loved it. The Old Lady loved it, too. She walked around touching this and that with her finger-tips, “Oh, the stories, the stories! Tucked in everything. Child, sit here on this funny old chest and I’ll tell you a story about anything you like.”

You, too, had been wandering around, fingering this and that. Suddenly with a cry that was almost an ache, you saw a spinning wheel. You ran to it. “You could make stories on this, please!” For grandmothers over the sea had spinning wheels for making winter dresses. You were hearing music—the purr of the wheels, the soft bang of the treadle, the slip and slide of the thread.

“Once upon a time, Come-Over Child, my family were Come-Overs, too, like Abraham in his day, also. You know Abraham in the Bible? How one day God said to him, ‘Abraham, leave Ur of the Chaldees, and go into a land which I will show you, and start a new nation.’ So Abraham did as God told him, and when he had traveled a long, long way from home he crossed over a certain river and settled down to live. Maybe there was a foreign burr in his speech, for the people in that land called him the Hebrew, which means the Come-Over Man. And you are a Come-Over person yourself; and I’m one, too. Only it was my great-great-great-grandmother that did the actual coming over, and they say she spun the family dresses on this

very spinning wheel." The Little Old Lady put her foot on the treadle and the air was full of music—whirr, whirr, whirr, with the soft thud of the treadle.

"Could you make more tellings of it?" you begged.

"It was this way. You see, long years ago in England my family wanted to worship God, but would you believe it, my dear, in England at that time men said there was only *one* way to worship God, and my family's way was the wrong way to them. These other people were so sure *they* were right that my family decided to find a new country somewhere in the world where they would be free to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. But you can imagine what a wrench it was for them to leave their dear England, where the lanes were pink with hawthorn and the thatched cottages were covered with roses. But God was first; and one hard day my family set sail in a ship. It was called the 'Mayflower.' Such an odd, old-fashioned ship, my dear, with big, square sails and not a smokestack in sight, for this was three hundred years ago, when nobody knew about steam. Month after month that little ship bobbed here and there on the waves like a useless nutshell. My family were sick. They thought they might die——"

You nodded. You, too, had been sick coming over. Boats were such awful affairs, with their noses dipping down to the floor of the sea and their tails rising up to whack down the stars; oh, it was simply absurd of them! But with you, the trip had been merely a matter of days, perhaps ten; whereas here was a story of week after week after week. You groaned sympatheti-

cally and were glad to hear that one cold November day the ship sighted land. Bleak, bare rocks rising out of the sea, with waves beating upon them. You discovered that the Old Lady's ancestors and many other families had a hard, hard time after landing, far worse than anything you yourself had after your landing. There was no cash-and-carry grocery. They had to raise all their own vegetables. It was the Indians who showed them how to do this—Massasoit and Squanto and Samoset; you thrilled at that story of the first year when they nearly starved, but the Indians saved them. There was no delicatessen shop. They had to grind their own flour and bake their own bread. There was no corner drug store. They had to collect and dry their own herbs and nurse their own sick. There was no schoolhouse. They had to build their own. There was no church—and this, as you already knew, was exactly what they had come to America to find. You began painting little pictures in your mind's eye of prim Priscilla trudging through deep snow to a little log meeting-house on Sunday mornings.

The Littlest Old Lady suddenly smiled, "Can you also see her spinning on *Monday* morning, you fanciful Come-Over Child? For I think maybe she was spinning a dress for all America to wear, not a dress with sleeves and cuffs and a hem; nothing to be handled with hands; but a dress made from strands of fine old customs, true habits, deep thoughts, high hopes and holy reverences, all woven into an invisible garment."

You began to feel mystified. It sounded like a secret such as an old, old attic would surely hide, but you

couldn't quite understand. The Littlest Old Lady twinkled at you.

"No wonder your brow is all wrinkles, Come-Over Child. I seem to be talking in riddles, don't I? But you're so good at painting pictures in your mind's eye, can't you see a lot of little children playing on the floor around this spinning wheel, three hundred years ago? Above the whirr of the wheel can't you hear their mother telling them stories of England, how the family longed to worship God freely and could not, over there; but how here, in America, they were free, and this was wonderful. All their little faces glowed! Yes, to worship God in their own free way was wonderful—worth crossing the seas, worth long hard winters. They heard, too, about how the little town hall was built, how town government was set up, how justice was dealt out to wrong-doers and to right-doers. And what the spinning wheel spun in stories for one lot of children, it kept right on spinning for these children's own children, when they had grown up and married to have boys and girls of their own. In other words, the dress I'm talking about is something the dictionary calls '*Ideals*,' spun from all the highest and best ideas those early Pilgrims had. And year by year, as new shiploads of Come-Over people came over to America, they, too, have tried to wear the Ideals the Pilgrims spun for them. They found it was a comfortable dress, a sensible dress, a beautiful dress, a good dress, a safe dress."

You began to smile all over your nice little foreign face. You began to see how *laws* kept you safe and comfortable, *schools* kept you sensible, *Churches* kept

you good and beautiful to live with. You were really dressed in the Ideals the Pilgrims had crossed the sea to bring to America.

The Littlest Old Lady looked suddenly unhappy: "It's the style nowadays to shorten the skirts of this old-fashioned dress, my dear; they want to cut down the arm of the law, to have less hem to the school, and as to the girdle of the church, a lot of people don't want to be bound in at all. But this little lopped-off new dress may not keep your arms safe when you're in danger; if the belt is too loose, the cold winds will blow around and you'll flap in the wintry blasts and wish you had the belt back again. But I'm still talking way above your head, poor child."

But you wagged said head energetically: "No, me like!" For who isn't flattered to be treated like a grown-up and told in word-pictures how America wears the dress the Pilgrims spun from Ideals which for generations have kept America strong and wise and safe and beautiful. You began to see certain new Come-Over people saying: "We could do without this Ideal or that Ideal." You began to see them lopping off this and lopping off that, just as the Littlest Old Lady had said, until the modern Ideals were briefer and shorter, almost disappearing.

"And nobody's a bit happier for it," the Littlest Old Lady said wisely. "Out in my garden I find that the shrubs which grow best are the ones we cut back early in the spring, and the grass turns into hay unless we cut it and cut it and cut it. I feel the same way about Ideals, Come-Over Child. They may seem to hamper

you, to hem you in and hold you back and cut you down, but it's the perfect law of liberty really to exercise self-control within bounds. So its high time the spinning wheels were set to work again, spinning new strands for the old discarded ones. Perhaps you could spin a few, yourself; in fact, you are spinning them every single day, whether you know it or not. And America tomorrow will be what you spin for it today—try spinning justice and kindness and reverence and thoroughness and neighborliness and world friendship and peace.”

Shadows began to fall. The attic was getting dark. It was very mysterious. Fall leaves fell with soft little thuds on the roof overhead, and out of the dusky corners quaint Pilgrims in kerchiefs and caps seemed to come toward you with outstretched hands: “We went through years of toil and strain to make America for you, Come-Over Child; now it is yours to *keep her laws, to keep her faith, to make her as beautiful* as of old and *more beautiful still* for the new Come-Over people. Spin the dress, Child. Spin it honestly and diligently and merrily. Love it and guard it and treasure it. It's priceless. Add your own bit. This is the best recipe for a Thanksgiving dinner which really gives thanks.”

As you tiptoed down the creaky stairs you felt a little tune humming upward from your throat toward your lips. You waited until you had left the Fairy Tale House and had started to scuffle homeward through the brown leaves before you dared hum it aloud, and from that day to this you have painted a different pic-

ture in your mind's eye as you sing these familiar words in school:

*"O beautiful for Pilgrim feet
Whose stern, impassioned stress
A thoroughfare for freedom beat
Across the wilderness.
America, America,
God mend thine every flaw.
Confirm thy soul in self-control
Thy liberty in law."*

XII

THE BOY WHO FELL OFF THE ROOF

THERE are a number of things to be said about falling off the roof. In the first place, it hurts. Very much indeed! It hurts so much that the doctors at the hospital scowl until all kinds of ridges furrow their learned foreheads, and one doctor says this and another doctor says that. Even the X-ray has something to say about it: "Note this bone here, sir, and that bone there, sir—shattered and battered, no word for it!"

But the people who have even more to say about this falling off the roof are the police. I don't know how you may feel about them yourself, but to me policemen are wonderfully comforting souls. They look so substantial and solid and competent and protecting. You wonder if they sleep in those nice, hard, round, blue hats, for a policeman without such a hat could hardly be a policeman at all. But then, we have probably never fallen off other people's roofs often enough to know that it really is a highly suspicious proceeding, and a hat more or less passes unnoticed: blue-coated and brass-buttoned gentlemen may pick you up and call an ambulance, but you have fainted and know nothing until hours later when they again see their duty and do it! This is often rather unpleasant, not so much for them as for those who fall; for you can frac-

ture dozens of bones, batter your crown and shatter your ribs; they merely pull out black notebooks and thick pencils, and pester you with tedious questions:

1. What is your name?
2. Where do you live?
3. Where were you born?
4. How old are you?
5. Your father's full name?
6. Oh, not living? When did he die?
7. Born in this country, was he? No? Where, then?
8. No brothers or sisters?
9. Mother living? Now see here, we aren't going to *hurt* her, kid; just you rest still and lie easy!
10. You got any occupation? Steady pay?
11. Why aren't you in school?
12. How did it happen that if you live in the second ward you were over in the twelfth ward on Friday evening? Speak up, now!
13. Why were you on that roof, eh?
14. How did you get up on it, you young monkey?
15. How did you ever fall off?

Questions one to fourteen inclusive could be answered quite solemnly, owing to the miserable ache of broken bones; but question number fifteen positively had to be smiled at—for why do people ever fall off of roofs, anyhow? Certainly not for the pure pleasure of it. The boy who had proved this unpleasantness lay in his hospital cot and crinkled the corners of his eyes (all that the bandages left on view) as he answered: "Why, I just—stepped off. See?"

It was at this point that the nurse slipped a ther-

mometer into his mouth, and, after reading it, announced with charming sternness that her patient was getting far too excited by all these questionings, the policemen must please go at once. It was amazing how those grown men, so blue and so bulky, tiptoed obediently out of the room before the muslin authority of one white starched apron and one saucy little white cap. The Boy Who Fell Off The Roof closed his tired eyes and adored her for this ability to chase "cops." Perhaps he would not have adored her quite so ardently if he could have heard what was said outside the door.

Policeman No. 1: When he was brought here you examined his pockets, Nurse. What did you find in them?

Nurse (dimpling demurely): Well, let me see, Officer. In that left hand pocket I found four marbles, three pebbles, one cork, two nails, a piece of red twine, a piece of green twine, part of a broken jackknife, the stub of an old pencil, a piece of licquorice candy, a robin's egg very badly squashed . . .

Policeman No. 1 (breathless from jotting down this wicked list!): Say, what size pocket did that boy have? And about that robin's egg, Nurse, very suspicious, very suspicious. There is more in this than meets the eye. How about it, pardner?

Policeman No. 2 (solemnly wagging his head): Sure! This is the way I figure it out,—robins' eggs are laid and hatched and reared in the treetops, Miss. Generally speaking, that is. And treetops is reached by roofs, see?

Nurse (brightly): Aren't you wonderful? So quick! And yet, some eggs really do drop to the ground quite unaided by burglars. I've picked them up myself, and policemen never waxed excited over it! Policeman No. 2: Ahem! Ahum! No doubt, Miss. And now how about his other pocket?

Nurse: It had nothing of any importance. Just some colored advertisements torn from a magazine, I should judge.

Duet of Policemen: What kind of advertisements, Nurse?

Nurse: Oh, just the interiors of rooms, as I remember. Policeman No. 1: *There is more in this than meets the eye!* What kind of rooms?

Nurse: Nurseries and libraries and boudoirs and kitchens——

Policeman No. 2: Ah ha, nurseries? And the room behind that roof was a nursery, Miss! See?

Nurse: How clever you are at catching clues, aren't you?

Policeman No. 1: If we could have the ads, Nurse—I'd thank you kindly to fetch them.

She "fetched" them, and the policemen creaked away down the corridor, while the nurse returned to her suspicious patient in the ward. He was very feverish. He would have liked to toss and roll, but how could he with those bones in splints and casts? That was the worst of falling off the roof. It meant such a quiet life for weeks and weeks to come.

The boy hated it. He smiled only once, and that

was when they told him that he must lie still so that his bones could knit.

"What will they knit—sweaters and shawls for ladies?" he asked eagerly.

"No," said the Day Nurse, dryly, "they will only knit bones in your legs so that you can climb more roofs, I suppose, and fall off all over again, and land in jail the next time."

The Day Nurse was that kind of a person! She said things at you, gruffly and bluffly. It was the Night Nurse who was adorable. In spite of all the dark facts that she knew about this boy who fell off a roof she was often very nice to him, especially after midnight when everybody else was asleep. She would lay her cool white hand on his hot forehead and hum soft music in his ear. Humming is not a thing that nurses are required to do, but it was very jolly. He really should have been obliging enough to go to sleep for her, only you can see for yourself that it paid to stay awake.

"Tell me," said the nurse, confidentially, "why did you climb the roof, sonny?"

He groaned. That roof! All conversations began and ended with it nowadays.

"I dunno," he answered.

"Oh, yes, you do know," she teased. "Why don't you tell me?"

"Well," he said finally, at the end of his second week in bed, "it was this way: I was walking down this nice street, see? And it set me to thinking."

"Yes, thinking. But about what?"

"Oh, just things. And all of a sudden a light went on in a room on somebody's second floor. It looked like the sort of place I wanted to see, so I got up on the roof. I was really awfully surprised to find myself there, it was all so sudden."

"Yes, but why did you fall off?"

"Well, I didn't want to scare the little chap, see?"

"What little chap?"

"The little fellow behind the window."

"But what kind of a child was it?"

"Oh, just a—kid."

"And do you mean to tell me that you obligingly fell off that roof in order not to frighten a perfectly unknown child?"

"Yes, ma'am."

The nurse removed her cool white hand from his forehead and walked away without humming another hum to woo back his vanished sleep. What a story! She did not feel like soothing anyone who told such perfect absurdities. How could she believe them?

She confided in the Tall Interne, and the Tall Interne said the boy was a case! "A pretty slick customer, if you ask me."

But there was still Miss Treadwell to tackle this boy who was too "slick" a customer for internes and nurses. Miss Treadwell was not adorable like the Night Nurse nor superior like the Day Nurse. She was really very plain, and so matter-of-fact in her friendships that you felt that you had been born knowing her. When such a person belongs heart and soul to God, it is a wonderful thing for the world. Especially for boys who fall

off the roof. For you must now hear that Miss Treadwell was really enthusiastic about his falling off the roof in order not to frighten a little child. A delightful smile broke over her plain, tired face, making it really quite lovely.

"But what a splendid quick-witted thing for you to do!" she cried. "For, of course, you knew that it was absolutely all wrong to be up on anybody's roof and that it would startle the boy almost to death to see you there. Probably he was a nice little fellow, too."

"Yes," agreed the boy, warmly. "He had yellow hair."

"They so often do," nodded Miss Treadwell in that understanding way of hers. "I am especially fond of little boys with yellow hair."

"Same here!" responded the roof-climber. "I've got a picture of a little chap like that."

"You have? I'd like to see it, where is it?"

"It's in my pants. But that Day Nurse has hid 'em away somewhere, I guess. She's terrible neat. Nothing ever lies around here, no ma'am! Especially nothing of *mine*. She hasn't got a particle of use for me. She thinks I'm tough. She's even got the Night Nurse turned against me now. If you hadn't just happened along, I wouldn't have had anybody to understand me!"

"But that's my business—happening along and understanding," smiled Miss Treadwell, very simply. "Now tell me some more about the little yellow-haired boy behind the window on your roof. What was he doing?"

The boy in bed grew positively enthusiastic: "It was all just like my picture, ma'am. There was a fireplace and a lady and a gentleman and everything, with real rugs on the floor and a real fire. See?"

"U'm'm!" murmured Miss Treadwell. It was the most comfortable of-course-I-see sound. The Boy Who Fell Off The Roof looked at her, startled.

"Awfully funny, isn't it?" he confided as friend to friend.

"Oh, awfully funny!" she nodded. "But tell me just why it's funny?"

"You and me knowing it was like my picture, with a yellow-haired kid and everything. Say, I really hardly expected to see things like that outside of pictures! But I saw it—right in this town! So now I guess if I just keep on looking maybe I'll find the rest of my pictures coming true, too. I knock around town a lot—a messenger boy has to—but I never got sent on a job in a nice street before. I haven't got much polish for nice jobs. But I could try for them, I guess. Life ain't so bad after all, is it?"

Miss Treadwell gulped. Then she smiled. (It was quick work, but she managed it beautiful.) "Life's pretty good to some of us," she agreed.

The boy nodded.

But what he meant and what she meant were two entirely different things.

Before she left the hospital she cornered the Day Nurse and asked to see the advertisements found in the boy's trouser pockets. "Could I take these away with me and keep them a few days?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, indeed, Miss Treadwell, they aren't valuable!" smiled the Day Nurse, obligingly. Isn't it curious that she had two sets of manners—one for boys who fall off roofs, and another for friendly visitors?

Miss Treadwell, however, treated the clippings as if they were very valuable indeed; and all morning long as she called on other friendless people in that hospital she was conscious of a great curiosity about these "pictures." It was not until she was sipping her tea at luncheon that she had time to examine them; she spread the five torn, crumpled sheets of paper on the table before her.

It was true that policemen might read into them attempts at kidnapping or burglary—for the first picture showed a beautiful lady sitting in a big velvet chair admiring a marvelous tray of silver knives and forks held open on her knee. Over her leaned a beaming gentleman; beside her stood a beaming boy. The silver was evidently their present to her, for the caption beneath the picture said:

"THE BEST IS NONE TOO GOOD FOR MOTHER."

Another advertisement showed a child's nursery with a fire glowing on the hearth and a little yellow-haired boy in white pajamas sitting among toy elephants and engines while his mother read aloud to him. The legend underneath the picture said:

"BOOKS THAT HOLD THE ATTENTION OF YOUNG AND
OLD ALIKE."

A third advertisement showed a little blue and white kitchen, with a shining nickel stove and a pink geranium on the window sill between snowy curtains. A pleasant round little old lady, in a gingham apron, had her hands upheld in delight. The caption said poetically:

"THEY WHO COOK MUST ALSO LOOK, MAKE THE SIGHT JUST RIGHT."

The fourth advertisement showed a radio playing in a darkened firelit room, with an old lady waiting patiently beside the hearth. The caption said:

"MUSIC IS A FRIEND FOR LONELY HOURS!"

The fifth advertisement was a table in a pretty boudoir, where a lady bent over a vase of flowers on the table. Perhaps you have already guessed the well-known words beneath it:

"SAY IT WITH FLOWERS."

Ah, yes, policemen might see in such soiled clippings the intention to steal silverware, or to kidnap children, or to enter kitchens stealthily, or even to try to walk off with radios tucked inconspicuously in trouser pockets! But Miss Treadwell was not a policeman. She went to see the Judge of the Juvenile Court.

"Concerning the case of Roddy Schmidt," she began. . . .

"What did he do?" asked the Judge, searching through his file for the name.

"He fell off a roof," she replied, and then of course

she had to laugh, for it is by no means a criminal offense to lose your footing.

"It sounds as if this Roddy Schmidt had had his punishment already!" smiled the Judge. (You noticed at once that he had the kindest of twinkles in his eyes.) "What else did he do besides lose his balance?"

"He had these in his pocket," said Miss Treadwell. "What do *you* deduct from the presence of this incriminating evidence found on the person of a boy who falls off a roof?"

Judges almost always hem and haw. It gives them time to think, you know. Especially when they really don't know what to think. Our Judge, therefore, hemmed and hawed for four and a half minutes; then he looked over the tops of his spectacles at Miss Treadwell.

"Has this boy a mother?"

"Yes."

"What sort of a woman is she?"

"She's paralyzed. She's little and tired and poor. She lives in a perfectly hideous room. Roddy adores her."

The Judge folded the clippings and handed them back: "Then I approve of him. He's a dreamer and she's the fair lady of his dreams. He wants her to have music when he's away and a silver spoon and a pink geranium. What are you going to do about it, Jennie Treadwell?"

"Well, just between you and me and the gatepost, Leonard," smiled Miss Jennie Treadwell, "I'm going to be a Fairy Godmother! I called to be sure that

your policemen wouldn't hound the footsteps of this nice boy the minute he's able to hobble around once more. For he's all right! I've seen him, and I know it. You haven't seen him, yet you know it, too. He's led a forlorn life—you know the places where messenger boys are sent at night? Well, he's lived in the worst neighborhoods all his life, and yet he has absorbed nothing bad. He's simply divinely hungry and thirsty for beauty. Aside from his precious advertisements he had not dared believe there was such loveliness in the world until he climbed that roof and saw it. Then he proved what beauty of soul he had by backing off into space in order not to startle a little unknown child. So now the only thing for me to do is to hurry back to my Christian Center and get out some empty olive bottles."

The great Judge leaned back in his official chair. He put the finger tips of one hand against the finger tips of the other hand. "Jennie," he said, much puzzled, "is there any Christian connection between a boy with soul enough to fall off a roof and—empty olive bottles?"

"Leonard," said Miss Treadwell with mock solemnity, "there is. For olive bottles have such a lovely shape. Tall and slender. Moreover they will hold just enough flowers for Roddy's mother, for where will she ever get many or large bouquets? My classes at the Center will paint those bottles; one, a clear yellow to hold daisies and brown-eyed susans. Another, a dull blue to hold zinnias and nasturtiums. Another, a gorgeous green to hold golden rod and asters. You see,

I'm providing vases enough to last through the summer. And toward Fall my boys shall paint her a flower pot, probably a soft-blue-green, so that a prim little pink geranium can blossom in it all winter. But long before that, some of us will have hemstitched sensible little cheesecloth curtains to flutter at the windows, and some of us will wash those windows until they shine—just like advertisement windows. Meanwhile, the rest of us will be covering cushions and nailing quaint, flowered chintz in flounces on the shelves, for on those shelves our loan collection of books will stand. 'Books to hold the attention of young and old alike,' as the advertisement kindly promises. Oh, yes, Leonard, there's a *very* Christian connection between bottles and souls. And speaking of connections, we have an ardent group of little radio fans at my Center; I think they will know just how to set up a radio outfit for a lonely little old lady . . ."

The Judge took off his glasses to see Miss Treadwell more clearly. "Jennie," he said, "did you know that somebody has written you up, word for word, and deed for deed, in a book I have right here on my desk?"

"Oh, you don't *mean* it?" she cried, so completely astonished that she dropped all five of Roddy's clip-pings on the floor. The Judge did not realize that she was picking them up, for he was reading to her about herself (and also, of course, about those others who would soon be making lovely dreams come true).

When he had finished, she was standing very still, her eyes shining: "Oh, Leonard, if I could only believe

that those words would really be said about me, how happy I should be!"

But you and I need only read what the Judge read to her from Matthew 25:34-40 to know that she will surely deserve to hear every word of it. The Boy Who Fell Off The Roof has proved it to us.

XIII

JACK-IN-THE-BOX

MARY had had a party.

Bessie had had a party.

Susan had had a party.

Even the baby had had one.

But Jack? Well, you know how it is with boys! He said he wouldn't have a party for *anything*. They were so silly. What would he feel like, anyhow, with all the fellows thinking they had to come with presents and things? And how would he look cutting a cake? As for candles . . .

His mother didn't mind. She was altogether used to Jack by this time, of course; so the more objections he kept raising, the more new little plans kept jumping around in her head, until finally all those various little plans sat down together for a solemn conference, and the first thing anyone knew there was a delighted clapping of hands and the solemn-ness had become prodigiously jolly.

"I have it!" she cried. "We'll give a party, but not just for *you*. For all the nice young Black Jacks also; and instead of presents for you, we'll fill a magic box for them. As for candles . . ."

Well, it was pretty mysterious! Things went on that nobody understood but Jack and his mother.

Mary and Bessie and Susan listened at all the key-holes and squinted through all the door cracks in the most outrageous fashion, but they were no wiser than the guests when the eventful day arrived. For all anybody knew was what the funny invitations said, quite the funniest in the world—for they were little square pill boxes, and when you lifted off the lid a regular Jack-in-the-Box jumped out at you! Not at all difficult to make, either, for one end of a long, narrow strip of stiff white paper had been pasted on the bottom of the box; the rest of the paper was then pleated into about a dozen folds, pressed down, with the picture of a boy's head pasted at the outer end. Of course, when you raised the lid, up popped those flattened pleatings, making Jack jump out of his box! Then you could read what was written along the pleatings: "Dear Mary (or Tom, Dick, or Harry, as the case might be),

"I guess it's all right to have birthday parties, after all, and I hope you'll surely be on hand for my Jack-in-the-Box party on Saturday afternoon. But would you mind bringing just as many pennies and nickels as you can, instead of getting me a regular present, for we're going to fill a Magic Box to send south, and it's going to be a perfect circus. So that's all for now, but you'd better come early. Jack."

Mary said it wasn't any sort of an invitation!

Bessie said: was it quite *polite*?

Susan said maybe they hadn't intended bringing a present anyway!

But their mother said, "Sh! Sh! it's an entirely

proper invitation, and Jack had such a terrible struggle wording it to suit him. So please don't discourage the poor boy, for birthdays happen only once a year and he has never had a real party before, so this one is to be *his!* And quite original."

"Oh!" said the three disgraces, gracefully subsiding. But they could hardly wait. Neither could Tom, Dick nor Harry, nor the other members of Jack's class. Friday was like *three* Fridays, while Saturday morning dragged along like a whole week-end. Parties dared not ring the front doorbell until 2 P. M., of course; so the guests politely waited at the curb until the town clock chimed. Then they entered, took off their wraps, and appeared in the parlor jingling like millionaires owing to the peculiar contents of their pockets. It was all pretty mysterious.

Then things began. For Jack's mother came in and said that of course they had all read about 'Benezer and Cinderella, hadn't they? And they said, "Why, yes, Mrs. Nelson, you see it's in our new Rainbow book!"

"Exactly!" she nodded. Then she said that Jack had developed into a giant-killer and was doing his work through a Jack-in-the-Box which would certainly help the little Southern cousins of Cinderella and 'Benezer. So kindly step this way and see the box. *They stepped!* And there stood such a big square crate that their hearts sank, for surely it would take a mint of money to fill it. But before they had a chance to become too indigo-blue, up rose the lid of that crate and out popped a truly enormous Jack-in-the-Box, oh! a veri-

table giant of a creature who actually touched the ceiling!

"Dear me! Dear me!" squealed the girls, somewhat alarmed.

"Goodness gracious!" gasped the boys.

For of course giants really never come to well-regulated birthday parties, especially black-faced giants who sigh with gentle voices as they curtsy: "I'se powerful glad to see all you nice white young ladies and gent'men, 'deed I is! I reckon mebbe you nebber did see any such a giant as me, so I'se jess gwine to ca'm your twitterin' hearts, for I'se only de ole two-faced giant, Ig'runce-and-Poverty. Dat's all: Ig'runce-and-Poverty! Reckon mebbe youse heard tell how down souf in Dixie the black folks ain't got nearly enough schools to go around—no sah! Black schools am ebery bit as scarce as blackberries in December, so de ig'runce of black folks am colossal! Yes, sah! colossal. Jess like me! Well then, if there ain't no school in town, reckon mebbe you figgers out that black folks can jess tote their chillens over to anudder town, 'cause why mebbee there am a mission school handy. Sure, honey! But black chillens has got to have money to feed 'em and house 'em and clothe 'em and teach 'em, they's so powerful poor. But along comes ole Mistah Jack de Giant-Killer: 'Hello,' says he to me, says he, shaking his fist in my face, says he, 'youse gettin' too big altogedder. Deed you is! I'se gwine to reduce you!'

"*'Reduce me, honey!'* says I, and I laugh fit to die. Jess like this I laughed," (and the big giant fairly

rippled all over with giggles, until the Birthday Party hardly knew whether to be alarmed or amused!) 'And may I 'quire how youse aimin' to reduce me, Jack?' says I, real polite. 'Yes, ma'am,' says he, 'I'se gwine to raise a heap o' money to send a lot of black boys an' girls to *school*, so there won't be so much ig'runce down souf. Then I'se gwine to raise anudder heap o' money and build new *churches* for the black folks what keeps trabbeling up norf to live. And I'se gwine to build *Christian Centers* up norf, too, for when black folkses learn to cook and sew and live proper-like, there ain't gwine to be so much poverty or ig'runce, see?' Well sah, I reckon I'se nebber been so tickled. That lil Jack o' a giant-killer aimin' to reduce *ME!* But say, I'se sure gettin' mighty thin; reckon before this party am over I may be turrible reduced. 'Deed I may!"

Now of course you must be wondering where in the world Jack got his giant! His birthday guests wondered, too, but they were kept in strict suspense about the facts which I am now going to tell *you*, namely that the giant was nothing but 1 aunt + 1 umbrella + 1 cane + 1 soft cushion + 2 black false faces + clothes! You can just try it yourself some time and see how easily Aunt Alice was able to become really gigantic by merely holding an old umbrella above her head, opened in the usual fashion. She had fastened a cane to the ferrule which projected above the umbrella—this had to be done very securely so that there was no danger of its coming loose. Then around the cane she tied a cushion, over the cushion she fitted a

waist, stuffing the arms and also a pair of long black gloves. For the black faces she bought two very kindly, smiling masks—not the hideous *comic* ones, but very friendly pleasant countenances, and knotted a red bandanna kerchief into a turban in true southern-mammy style. So you will see that the upper part of the lady giant was all done; as the open umbrella formed the hips, an enormous skirt was made of sheets, around which a big blue-checked apron was tied. And behold, the giant was completed! Inside stood Aunt Alice with her “speeches” neatly written so that she could read them off, or even fan herself with them when she grew too warm.

“Poor old giant!” said Jack, patting it affectionately. “You’re not really a bad giant at all, you just haven’t had the proper advantages.”

“And that’s the truf!” the giant nodded. “So jess you gib me light to lighten my ig’runce. I’d take it kindly if all you young folkses would now play ‘Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick, Jack Jump Over The Candlestick.’”

Of course nobody had ever played such a game before, but they soon learned how, for three candlesticks with fairly tall candles were placed on the floor at intervals of three feet. Each candlestick was named for a real Negro church in town, and little signs beside them said: “Zion Methodist Church,” “Mt. Olivet Baptist Church,” “Presbyterian Chapel.” Even the street addresses were added, so that everybody went home a good deal wiser about the Negro churches in

town, for you couldn't help but realize that their towering spires were really like lights in the world.

Whenever anybody wanted to enter a game (and they always did), a coin had to be dropped into the big blue Magic Box which dangled from the giant's arm: all afternoon you could hear the nickels and pennies and dimes clinkling merrily as each player paid for new games. It was really great fun, for it you wanted to have another chance at any game, you could pay again and start all over. In "Jack Be Nimble, Jack Be Quick" each player in turn had to jump over the candlesticks without even touching the wicks! The two players with the best scores then played the game off, and when Tom managed to leap over the Presbyterian Chapel which Dick had knocked down in *his* turn, he received as a prize "In the Vanguard of a Race"—true stories of famous Negroes.

"And now," said the giant, "supposin' you all pays a visit to the House That Jack Built, only don't you dast to play without you pays me fust."

They all paid, and then the outline of a big cardboard house was pinned on the wall. Above the doorway of this house was printed:

THIS IS THE HOUSE THAT JACK BUILT
(NEGRO CHRISTIAN CENTER)

Each player was given a little Negro figure (Aunt Alice had simply cut out some magazine pictures of boys and girls, coloring their faces a very becoming brown, and naming them Flotsam, Jetsam, Topsy, Sambo, Rastus, etc.) and then, just as in "Tailing The

Donkey," the players were blindfolded in turn, whirled around three times, and headed toward the Christian Center to pin their Negro child in the doorway of the House that Jack Built.

Most of them seemed to prefer the roofs and chimneys as entrances! So Mary won the game—for her little Jemima landed on the door sill in proper fashion.

"And now play Little Jack Horner," cried the giant. So there was more jingling of coins; then, one at a time, the various players were blindfolded and seated in a corner where they pulled loose gloves on their hands, after which a Jack Horner pie was given them—just a deep round baking-tin filled with seven "plums"—a spool, an English walnut, a circular pill box, an emery, bees wax, an eraser, a salt cellar. As all these plums were almost the same size and shape, it took some clever guessing to sit in the corner and recite:

*"Little Jack Horner sat in a corner
Eating a Christmas pie,
He stuck in his thumb and pulled out a ?
And said what a bright boy am I!"*

For when the players came to the blank space they had to shout the name of the particular "plum" which they had just pulled out; moreover they had to mention what use Jack would make of the spool or the salt cellar or the walnut at the Negro Christian Center, and no player could repeat the uses mentioned by a previous player!

"And now, young ladies and gent'men," said the giant, "we am gwine to play that lubly game called

*'Jack Sprat could eat no fat
His wife could eat no lean,
And so between the two, you see,
They licked the platter clean.'*"

Nobody could imagine how to play such a game, but it soon became clear, for a big platter was placed on a small table, and on the platter were an equal number of yellow and of white slips of paper, folded in half so that they stood up like little tents. Two players—"Jack Sprat" and "his wife"—stood on opposite sides of the table, and at a signal they leaned over and began trying to pick up a tent with their teeth: Jack could only pick up white ones, his wife could only pick up yellow ones. When they finally had one between their teeth, they had to open it quickly, read the question, and write a correct answer before starting to lick the platter clean again! The player who first finished answering four questions correctly could stop playing and a new player was chosen; the other had to continue until he or she beat the opponent. It was the funniest sight in the world to see them biting away so viciously, then writing so strenuously! New tents of the proper color were set up for new players, of course. These were some of the questions:

Name a famous Negro.

Name a Negro school down south.

Where is there a Negro church in town?

How many Negroes in the United States?

What was the Proclamation of Emancipation?

What did Abraham Lincoln do for the slaves?

How would you like to be treated if you were black?

Plenty of fairly simple questions, like this latter one, were slipped in among the more difficult questions; but, even so, Bessie was a pretty bright girl to win out above everyone else.

"Listen to me, all you white chillens," said the giant, "youse got to *pay* and play 'Jack-and-Jill' for your next game!"

This was a very jolly *three-legged race*. Jack and Jill each carried a little pail full to the very brim of potatoes, and as they hopped together from one end of the room to the other, the one who spilled the fewest potatoes from his full pail was the winner. Then all the winners had to play it off between them, until the best hopper of all was awarded an absurd *brown-paper* crown with glistening gum drops stuck on every point!

Last of all the giant roared: "Pay, and play 'Jack-and-the-Beanstalk'!"

The bean-stalk was the kind that never grew on land or sea before; it was a wooden clothes prop, the kind the laundress uses to hoist her clothes line in the air! The bean pods were eight big green paper cornucopias, tacked at intervals up and down the length of the pole. Under each pod was a label which—beginning from the bottom—read:

1. The little log cabin lying in the sun,
A bean down its chimney will count you 1.
2. The little black baby, so cunning and new.
A bean for a plaything will count you 2.

3. Pappy picks cotton for you and for me,
A bean for plantations will count you 3.
4. A bean for the turban which mammy wore
Will count you, at least, the number 4.
5. Ole Aunt Jemima, O my sake's alive!
A bean in her pancakes will count you 5.
6. Queer little Topsy is in a fix,
She "growed" so fast she will count you 6.
7. Ole Black Joe, hearing angels from heaven,
A bean for him will count you 7.
8. Jolly black Sambo, with primer and slate,
A bean for his schooling will count you 8.

The players were given eight beans apiece; then in turn they stood about five feet away and threw their beans, trying to get them into the upper pod which counted eight, of course, but usually they landed in a lower pod or—alas!—on the floor. The player with the highest score was the quiet-girl-next-door, who had been growing livelier and livelier all afternoon.

Just as this game was over, a peculiar wail came from the giant: "Oh, look at me! Look at me! I'se getting powerful thin—reckon all this here money has jess natcherly begun to reduce my ig'runce."

And sure enough, the giant began to get visibly thinner and thinner and thinner, until the guests could hardly believe their eyes at the tremendous shrinkage, which was caused, of course, by Aunt Alice who merely

closed the umbrella, so that the big hips dwindled into the slenderest size, and as she knelt on the floor the giant's huge height began to shrink also, almost in half.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" cried the Birthday Party, "we've just *got* to know who you are!"

So the first thing anyone knew Aunt Alice came forth, smiling,—a trifle hot, to be sure, but eager to count the money jingling in her Magic Box. And would you believe it? There was \$9.19. But not one of the Birthday Party thought that such a raggedy sum was enough; so they made it ten dollars then and there, after which there was a grand march to the dining room for a real Jack Horner Pie, and the Bean Stalk made a second appearance with its pods full of green candies. So everybody laughed a lot, and learned a lot, and gave a lot; and somewhere in America there is going to be a Cinderella or 'Benezer in school because of this magic Jack-in-the-Box! Don't you wish you had been there, yourself, to help fill it?

XIV

THE SIX WHO TASTED THE ONION STEW

You are not to suppose from the title to this story that the six who tasted the onion stew found poison in the pot! Far from it—for it was a very good stew, as stews go; but long, long before ever an onion bubbled or boiled, there was a certain murky October evening with a half drizzle of rain and a sharp tang of frost in the air. Along a certain dingy street two men went slinking, about ten feet apart: "toughs," if ever there were persons to deserve that disreputable title, and behind them came as nice a lady as you would care to meet.

But you may guess she kept an eye upon those two ahead, and her heart beat uncomfortably fast as the street led underneath a railroad bridge, a jet-black tunnel of a place, full of grim shadows, with deserted warehouses guarding each end and street lamps flickering pale, wan lights only at distant intervals. Anybody might have been forgiven twinges of fear at the lonely aspect, in company with those toughs prowling along ahead. And, frankly, the lady was nervous, wondering what to do! For, suppose that they had heard her footfall and should be lying in wait to "hold her up" within the shadows.

You must admit it was not pleasant: one wonders

what you would have done yourself! She, at her wits' end, did something most peculiar—she ran ahead and grabbed the arm of the nearer tough: "I b-beg your pardon," she began, as he swung around at this unexpected assault, "but I feel a little frightened about going under this dark bridge alone, I wonder—would you mind protecting me?"

Would he? *Would* he?

"Why sure, liddy, sure!" he cried, and clasped a grimy hand around her elbow. And she never guessed the strange, queer thing that was happening in Paulo Nievitch's heart, so relieved was she to know she need not walk alone through dangerous darkness; but, being the first American lady who had ever spoken to him in all his nine long, lonely years in this country, you can imagine the startled pride he felt in safeguarding this rare creature! When they had passed under the bridge he said to her, awkwardly: "Just spik de word, liddy, und me no drop you sooner you gets on de place what you'se goin' to!"

"Oh, how very kind of you," she said, "I would be so glad to have you come with me."

And quite as if his shoes were winged, and his shabby clothes had turned to glistening armor, he walked beside her proudly—like some knight errant of old who had rescued a fair lady! It is also pleasant to note that she did not seem to object to his rough, run-down appearance; calmly she explained how she was a city missionary, and how she had heard of a certain family in trouble and was hurrying there to help: "But I did not realize it would be quite such a

deserted neighborhood," she added, as they reached the door-step; "how can I ever thank you for your goodness in coming out of your way to bring me here so safely?"

"No spik it!" begged Paulos, pulling off his tattered cap politely, and overcome because she offered to shake hands. "You make me awful proud, liddy!"

So she disappeared indoors to do what she would have considered her real errand of mercy; and two hours later when she came out on the sidewalk again she had actually forgotten her escort, and was considerably startled to have something that looked like the trunk of a tree detach itself from the shadows and walk forward to meet her.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "oh, you *waited!* But you shouldn't have done it, not in this cold, unpleasant drizzle. Why, I never dreamed of such a thing—it's very, *very* kind of you——"

"Dat's all right, liddy," Paulos said awkwardly, "where we go to now, huh?"

"Home," she answered, and all the way along those dark, mysterious city streets they walked and talked, while she discovered that nine years ago he had first reached this Every Man's Land of ours, a little boy of ten, with his father.

"You should to see us work on factories, liddy, me und him; say, we work und save, work und save, for to send back to de old countree for de folks. But come two year ago dat old fader, he die in accidents; so now *me* work and *me* save, all alone," and Paulos sighed as he slapped his hip pockets to show how

empty they were, adding significantly: "Slow work, yes?"

"Oh, yes, indeed!" agreed the city missionary, who already knew many similar stories by heart, "now tell me about your mother and your sisters in the old country."

So he told her all there was to tell, and a lonely something that had made him hate America began to thaw and melt within his heart. And it seems to me that that was the time when the onions for the stew must have begun to sprout excitedly in some farmer's garden!

However *that* may be, sure it is that when the next pay-day came, Paulos Nievitch bought a collar and a necktie, and on Sunday scrubbed his grimy hands and went to church. To the church where his missionary lady went, of course—as far as he was concerned there *was* no other church in town, and certainly no other lady of any consequence at all.

As for the missionary, she persuaded him to go to night school, and helped him add his bank account to see how soon he could afford to send for his family in Europe. And in the course of time Paulos decided he wanted to join "her" church. His simple confession of faith won the heart of every deacon. But it just happened that on the very Sunday morning when he was to join there was only one other person to be received, and this person was a gentleman so famous and well-known that if his name were mentioned here you would know it instantly, yourselves, and agree with the deacons that possibly such a celebrity might not

care to stand side by side with poor, rough, awkward Paulos Nievitch. Indeed, Paulos felt embarrassed about it, himself! But the celebrated gentleman was disgusted with the deacons when they broached the matter to him: "See here, my good friends," he argued, "we live in a democracy, you and I, and none of us can ever claim that I am any better American or any better Christian than this boy who's already gone through trials by fire and water to *arrive*. Who knows what he may become—a fellow who's pulled himself up this far? Gentlemen, I'm *proud* to be received into the membership of this church on the same day as he!"

And this word came to Paulos' ears. A great lump rose in his throat: "Sure, I makes no forgetting of this, mister!" he exclaimed, gripping the celebrity's hand in a giant clasp. So that on that radiant Sunday morning in the month of April I think the onions for the stew were ready for the market. In any case, the money for three passages across the ocean had reached a certain little town in Europe where a mother and two daughters were rolling quilts and kettles into bundles, and bidding farewells to all their life-long neighbors.

Never was a little home of two small rooms in New York City more lovingly prepared for its new owners than the home which Paulos rented and which the missionary lady cleaned and scoured and polished. And no sooner had the newcomers landed and heard all of Paulos' tale than those onions were put on to stew! "For," as Mrs. Nievitch said, emphatically,

"anybody who's been so angel good on Paulos has a right to the best supper I can cook up!"

So the invitations went out that very morning, and that evening around a bare pine kitchen table the six of them sat down to onion stew. You may think it was a curiously-mixed sort of gathering, as indeed it was: when on one side of the table sat a tired and quiet missionary with a man who was a real celebrity, used to butlers and footmen and finger-bowls, yet obviously enjoying the simplicity of onion stew when shared with such beaming souls as his host and hostesses. How can one tell in words the speechless gratitude of those three delighted women? Not a word of English could they speak, but they beamed incessantly and gesticulated with their knives and forks to express the gratitude they felt for this gentleman and lady who had reached way down to pull poor Paulos up. So that to all six of them that onion stew stands out in their memories like some holy supper, for

*"In Christ there is no East nor West,
In Him no South nor North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.
In Him shall true hearts everywhere
Their high communion find—
His service is the golden cord
Close-binding all mankind.*

*Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be!
Who serves my Father as a son
Is surely kin to me.*

*In Christ now meet both East and West,
In Him meet South and North,
All Christly souls are one in Him
Throughout the whole wide earth."*

XV

THE FORTY-NINE-CENT BEADS

You have already guessed that forty-nine-cent beads are a real bargain. Especially such jolly beads, so red and gay. The minute she saw them she knew that they really had to be hers, and she fished around in her funny little pocketbook with the two compartments to find the forty-nine cents. But this was a provokingly hard sum to find—at first only thirty cents. Then thirty-eight. She looked at the clerk, “This isn’t quite enough, is it?”

“I’m sorry,” said the clerk; for this was such a nice little customer.

Then she remembered the pocket in her coat, and found ten cents. But even then she was one cent short, for forty-eight cents simply can not buy forty-nine-cent beads. She fished here. She fished there. Three pockets in her coat and one in her dress, but all empty. Then she turned the pocketbook upside-down and shook it, for everybody knows that sometimes pennies do fall out of purses. Especially old purses with shabby linings. But not one red cent fell out this time.

And all the while those nice jolly beads dangling anxiously! “Well,” said the customer. “I’m more sorry than you are.”

It was, of course, the moment of moments for a fairy to arrive. And one did! A fairy with whiskers, in the person of the Old-Gentleman-Who-Lived-At-The-End-Of-The-Street. The old gentleman with the cane and the coachman and the parrot and the housekeeper; the old gentleman who had been everywhere and seen everything, and was sometimes cross and always deaf.

But all this did not matter to our little customer. "If you please, Mr. Truesdale," she piped up loudly, "if you please, you live at the end of my street, so could I please *borrow* a penny from you? I'll return it before supper."

"What's all this? What's all this?" growled Mr. Truesdale in a very gruff fashion. Quite as if it had been a million-dollar loan, you know. Our own little customer was amused at him! "It's only a penny, you know. And I only want to borrow it. Anyhow, I guess the Bible would say it's more blessed to loan than to receive. Besides, it really does say to love your neighbor as yourself, and I'm your neighbor."

"What's this? What's this?" growled the old gentleman; but all this time his hand was groping in his pocket, and when it came out again there lay a penny in the palm of his hand. "There!" said he, smiling.

"There!" said the customer.

"There!" said the clerk.

But just then Mr. Truesdale began to look strangely at the beads, examining the slip of paper glued in a loop around one bead. "Dear me! Dear me!" said he. "This is very strange, missie. I shall have to

make a bargain with you. I'll loan you the penny if you'll bring the beads to my house and let me tell you a story about them. How about it?"

His little neighbor smiled from ear to ear. "I like it!" she beamed. Indeed, she kept on liking it all afternoon, as he whisked her home in his carriage, with the coachman cracking the whip, and the house-keeper opening the door of the house-at-the-end-of-the-street, and the parrot squawking: "What's this? What's this?" when they walked into the nice old parlor, where a gay fire was burning, all ready for stories about beads.

"Sit down," ordered the old gentleman. "This story is called *Made in Czecho-Slovakia*. See, the title is on this slip of paper glued around the beads. I wouldn't be at all surprised if I could find a chapter to go with each bead. Suppose we call chapter one, about this littlest bead, 'What the Map Had to Say About It.' And I'll ask you, if you please, to locate Czecho-Slovakia."

The little girl screwed up her forehead: "Well, now, it's a little pink piece of the map in southern Europe. It's not a bit big, and there's a dot on the map called Prague, and that's the capital."

"Well, well," said the old gentleman, "and yet Czecho-Slovakia may be very pink on your map but quite green as to grass and meadows. As for Prague, missie, Prague is full of buildings—I've eaten in them, and slept in them, and heard music and sermons and lectures in them. So now if you'll hold bead number two in your hand I'll call it 'The House Where Your

Beads Come From.’ It’s a ramshackle old house, with all sorts of beads in all its nooks and crannies. Red beads and blue beads, glass beads and wooden beads, plain beads and painted beads. There’s a special man painting patterns on some beads, and I know a story about him, so now hold the third bead in your hand and call it ‘Home, Sweet Home.’ You must whisk yourself in imagination out into the greenest of green country——”

The little girl began finding it great fun to journey on this train of beads.

“And now you are pleased to imagine a little house. A jolly little house, painted white with a very jolly little border in gay colors painted under the eaves. See, two square little green birds pecking at one round red cherry! Then a lot of stiff, prim flowers all in a row, with two more square birds nibbling at another round red cherry. Very gay, isn’t it?”

“Very gay!” giggled the little girl.

“All right, now hold the next bead and you’ll be invited indoors. We’ll call it ‘Won’t You Come Into My Parlor?’ There’s a big square stove to keep folks hot in winter, and nice plump peasants in wide billowy dresses embroidered in bright colors. There are bowls of soup on a red tablecloth, and grand cakes all marvelously iced. I think there’s a celebration on foot, for here come the village fiddlers with their old violins. Just listen to that music! Watch the peasants bow and scrape as they do their quaint square dances and their clogging. By and by it’s late, everybody begins saying strange sad farewells, for two sons in that

family are leaving home tomorrow morning. One son is going to Prague tomorrow to paint beads in a factory for little girls just like you to be buying in America some day for forty-nine cents. But the other son is coming somewhere in a ship—now where do you suppose?”

The little girl looked mysterious. “To America,” she guessed.

“Precisely. From the pink piece of land on the map he sails across some blue ocean on the map and reaches another place on the map called New York. So please hold the next bead in your hand and call it ‘The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.’ Now tell me, is he going to feel at home in this strange new land? Is he going to know how to speak the same language we speak, right away? Is he going to know the difference between a nickel and a quarter and a dime? Is everyone going to be honest with him and never cheat him? Is he going to find a jolly little house to live in, with nice square birds pecking at nice red cherries under the eaves?”

The little visitor nodded five very vigorous nods: No! No! No! No! No!

“Precisely! *No!* He is going to be lonely and in trouble; people will always be trying to cheat him and scolding him for not understanding English at once. So he will not be singing lustily: ‘The Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave,’ poor fellow. Now call the next bead ‘Old King Coal,’ while I take you to Pennsylvania with him to a dirty old coal town, where every morning of his life he climbs into a big

cage with other miners and is dropped down, down, down deep into the earth, where it is black as midnight. There will be long avenues of coal, and little side streets of coal, and little rooms, all coal. He will wear a tiny lantern in his cap. All day long he will whack away at those coal walls to loosen our coal for our furnaces! It will be very dangerous down there; sometimes the coal walls will come avalanching down on top of him. Then he will be very sick in hospitals, with broken bones and smashed ribs."

The little girl stared in a fascinated way at her forty-nine-cent beads. "Oh, my!" she gasped. "And I never once dreamed that there were such stories tucked in a necklace. Is there any more?"

So, then, the old gentleman told her other stories for each of the other beads: about how the miner sent money across the deep-blue sea to bring his dear old mother and his little brothers and sisters to America, this rich land, this fine land!

Over they came in a big ship which was caught in a violent storm, so that it pitched east, it pitched west, it pitched north, it pitched south, all in the most terrible fashion, so that everyone was utterly sick and miserable. But all this time they kept saying: "Wait till we get to America, *then* everything will be well with us. For America is a rich land, a fine land!" Over and over they said it, and dreamed dreams of a quaint little house with a jolly frieze of birds and flowers painted under the eaves.

Then they landed. There was such enormous bustle everywhere. Such terrific noise. The little sisters

cried into their best silk aprons. The little brothers cried, too. Everyone was tremendously lonely and frightened. Then they all went on a train to Pennsylvania, where THE coal mine was, that very special coal mine deep down underneath America, where their brother mined coal. They began to live in a little house. But it was not a jolly house. It was too dingy and dirty and forlorn. The silk factories belched forth soot on top of it all day long. The leaves on the trees withered and died. No grass could be persuaded to grow there, and no flowers. There was entirely too much soot—it sifted into the windows and made everything very black and very ugly. Even the sky was black, and the sunshine itself was a gloomy gray. The poor little sisters cried some more. And so did the little brothers. They really did not like a single thing about America! As you can see, it was the moment of moments for a fairy to come along and wave a wand. One did!

The fairy was a “missionary.” She was very friendly. She could talk their own language. She smiled. She invited them to her home. She gave them coffee and doughnuts. Then she showed them her kindergarten for small boys and girls. The little brothers smiled all over their nice round faces! The little sisters smiled, too. Everyone was happier—for they had a friend. Their own special friend!

It was just then that the old gentleman’s story ended. The little girl fingered her red beads in a dreamy fashion and kept murmuring the words on the tiny label, “Made in Czecho-Slovakia.” Over and

over she said it. Then she asked, "Was this a really-truly story?"

"Indeed it was, missie. And for every chain of beads made in Czecho-Slovakia there is a similar story about the same kind of people—poor, some of them; lonely, some of them; eager for friendship, all of them! So that the best thing you and I ever did was to have that missionary, and other missionaries, just like her, to be friendly to all the disappointed Slavs who come over here to America, expecting to find wealth and happiness in a pot of gold at the foot of our rainbow, but getting instead hard work and ugliness and loneliness."

The little girl smiled all over face as she put on her beads: "Thank you for the story, Mr. Truesdale. And I'm going to find a way to help that missionary. Don't you suppose she wants toys and dolls and games and money for her work?"

I leave it to you to guess the old gentleman's answer. I leave it to you, too, to figure out what you yourself can do to help other missionaries and other families whose life stories are tucked invisibly into every chain of beads made in Czecho-Slovakia.

XVI

THE STOCKINGS CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED

THERE is this to be said about stockings: on all the other days of the years *holes* may be ever so uncomfortable, but on Christmas Eve they grow positively dangerous! Especially great big holes through which little presents could all too easily slip and roll out of sight and perhaps stay lost forever and ever—which was a shuddering thought; you will agree this was something for Rebekah Rachel to worry over, when the holes in her own tattered stockings were as big as silver dollars!

Yet early on the morning of the day before Christmas she draped them over the foot of the bed: "I jess gets them ready for that old Mr. Santy Claus," she explained to her mother who was sewing buttons on cards as fast as she could. Sewing buttons on cards is not a quick way to earn money to pay rent and buy food and clothe a family, so Mrs. Einstein did not even take time to look at Becky's poor little Christmas stockings. But in her mind's eyes she saw them all day long—those poor little empty stockings dangling hopefully from the bedpost, put there in plenty of time for this absurd American fairy called Santa Claus.

"What for you go on believe in that old red fella?" she asked, as she threaded a needle.

"Well, ain't we been in America one year longer'n *last* Christmas? So maybe now he makes a remember of us! But say, mudder, couldn't you mend me up them awful holes? Things could fall through them holes so *terrible* easy!"

"Not much I couldn't mend them up," snapped Mrs. Einstein, "und don't you make no teasings on me, them stockings is something fierce mit holes, Becky; all day und all night would it take, und mit no buttons sewed on new cards where'd your supper come from, huh? Und your breakfast, huh? Mit your popper lost three four week, too! Und anyhow, Becky, ain't I told you I don't hold mit this Krisht holiday? You gotta mind how Jews ain't got no use for Krishts (Christians)."

So Rebekah Rachel walked sadly away; and sadly her mother sewed buttons on cards, until by and by it was five o'clock on Christmas Eve, with big feathery flakes of snow floating down from the sky—for all the world "like little angel's fedders," whispered Becky to herself, as she pressed her nose against the window-pane and watched the passersby. Never had there been people passing by with arms so full of bundles: men with little green trees tucked under their arms; men with great big trees trailing along behind them. Women with more parcels than they could possibly carry—you saw them stooping to pick one up every once in a while. Even the children skipped merrily by with little bits of packages clutched in their mittens. And above it all the cheerful clinkle-clankle of sleigh-bells. At least it *should* have sounded cheerful, but when Becky turned away from the window there was

mudder sitting under the feeble gas-jet sewing buttons on cards as hard as ever she could, and just beyond mudder's chair hung a pair of forlorn empty stockings, dangling from the bedpost.

Becky walked over and pinched them experimentally here and there—hoping against hope that in some mysterious way a dear surprising something-or-other might have already been dropped inside! But there was only emptiness. Becky sighed.

"Mudder," she said, "I think I go und walk around on the sidewalk."

"Sure, but mind you don't go getting yourself lost like what your popper done four week ago. My sakes, Becky, I'm most mad mit wondering—where could your popper have went to, anyhow?"

Becky shook her head forlornly. Fathers that walked out of front doors and never came back, no, not for four long weeks, were unhappy thoughts for Christmas Eve. So she slammed the door and started down the long flight of rickety stairs that led to the street. And on those stairs she met Sophie Sobreski.

Now it must be mentioned that Sophie was what Mrs. Einstein called a "Krisht," the Sobreskis were *all* Christians; so again and again Becky had been warned to have nothing to do with this little neighbor. But Sophie herself, having no such warning, greeted Becky with these words: "Say, I lets you in on a secret, so you won't tell my mudder! See! I unwraps my package und what have I got? Why, I got an apron—ain't it a grand apron? Well, I got a secret on my mudder over this apron, for tomorrow

she gets it from me for Christmas, und she don't know I been sewing it every week in my sewing class around to the Mission. I'll be some Santa Claus on my mudder, I guess!"

Becky fingered the apron gingerly and nodded a dull: "Uh-huh!" And not another word could she say, she was so overcome with envy and longing. Oh, to be Sophie and have a place called a mission to go to!

But no sooner had Sophie disappeared inside her door than Becky rushed back to her own flat and snatched her tattered stockings from the bedpost. Then down the steps she dashed, out on the street, through a back alley and around a corner to the little mission house. Just as if she had been there a hundred times before, Becky pushed open the door, entered, and this is what she said to the lady at the desk: "Is this here the place where Sophie Sobreski sews aprons as surprises on her mudder? Well then, I wants you should do favors on *me*, please! I wants you should mend me up my stockings for Santa Claus. My mudder she ain't got no time from buttons since my popper he got himself lost, and if that old Christmas feller *should* make visits on me tonight his present could fall through these holes terribly easy, see?"

You must admit that this was a good deal for any one person to *see* all in one breath and in one look! But she was wise enough and loving enough to see not only the enormous holes in Becky's stockings, but also the loneliness in her little face, and she quickly guessed at the poverty and trouble of her family.

"Tell me where you live, dear," she said, "and I'll not only see that your stockings are mended, but I'll remind old Santa Claus to pay you a visit."

"O-oh!" sighed Becky contentedly, and watched the lady write down the address. So this was the kind of thing that came to pass in missions!

As she walked home through the snowy streets there were more men with little green Christmas trees tucked under their arms, and more children with little bits of red packages clutched in their mittens. But she was no longer envious. She skipped along to the merry clinkle-clankle of the sleigh-bells, and said to mudder as she went to bed: "I've got secrets on you, mudder. You wait und see!"

And although she fully meant to stay awake and see Santa Claus arrive, she closed her eyes for half a minute; and the first thing she knew it was—*morning!* She hopped out of bed, and sure enough the stockings were bulky with the most delightful things—apples and oranges, candy and nuts, a little doll, a rubber ball, a gay red hair-ribbon, warm mittens: oh, you have no idea the happiness she found inside those stockings! She chuckled and chuckled, and turning, found her mother watching her.

"Look, mudder!" she cried, "that funny old red fella made visits on me last night—see!"

Mrs. Einstein nodded, but her eyes were full of tears: "Becky," she said, "I tells you something: that 'red fella' he was just an every-day Krisht *lady* mit arms full of bundles, und she says how she will help me finding your popper, und how next week I should

earn more moneys than by sewing buttons; und Becky, this afternoon they got a Christmas party on that Mission, und me und you is *asked!* Becky, I can't keep no more mad on Krishts! Any Krisht what makes mendings on a little kid's empty stockings und fills them up mit fruits und toys—say, you can't keep a mad on folks like *that*, Becky! Not mit baskets of Christmas eats left on the table und kind American ladies acting like we was their special friends."

And I'm thinking that all over again, in the quiet of that humble room, the Christmas angels sang—even as they sang long years ago:

*"Peace on earth
Good-will among men."*

XVII

PANTS FOR THE LITTLE PAPOOSE

SISTER SUSIE had never had a trip anywhere before and when she came home she really couldn't help talking about it, and talking about it, and *talking* about it, until every single child on her street knew exactly what happened at every hour of every day. For of course none of them had ever been anywhere either, and Sister Susie had such a way with her!—her eyes glowing like stars, her sentences often so comical:

“Well, this is the way it was. It was like a dream where the geography map begins stretching itself out bigger and bigger until you could go miling it and miling it and miling it from breakfast till supper, bridging it over all the rivers painted blue, upping and upping to the tops of all the mountains painted brown, then sliding it down to the valleys below. You know those cunning little dots on the map marked Buffalo and Cleveland and Chicago and Sioux City? Well sir, they bulged out like giant soap bubbles, out and out and out until finally they burst into perfectly enormous cities, with cops at the street corners yelling at Pop: ‘Hey, mister, you can’t turn left on that avenue!’ You know how cops act in big cities?”

But of course nobody did know, so they eyed Sister Susie enviously. The luck some girls had!

"And then all those green stretches called prairies petered out forever and ever and ever, and lasted from sunrise to sunset day after day. Until by and by it was only three days before New Year's. Then we got there."

The Children On Her Street sighed happily. So far so good! With the best yet to come. "Go on!" they urged.

"Pop's so terribly important in our denomination that we stayed in an honest-to-goodness house, with roofs and front porches and kitchen stoves and carpets and beds. But when the *Indians* began driving in, you should have seen how their wagons were loaded down with stuff. The squaws simply worked their poor heads off setting up their tepees before night fell to ink out all the sights. If they had no tent poles, the squaws cut down a tree or two, topping off long sticks for their poles. Then they planted these in a circle, tying all the tops together exactly like a lot of letter X's. Then they stretched dried skins over these poles to form the tent. I certainly broke into clouds of laughter to see the stiff pictures painted on the tent flaps, regular Noah's Ark animals strutting in straight lines, colored in red and yellow and green, with a wrinkled lake done in blue. I did a regular thunderstorm of tears because Pop was so important that they gave us a silly wood house with a silly wood roof, when a tepee would have been so much funnier."

The Children On Her Street nodded understandingly.

"But mother said: 'Do an April Shower right away,

Susie Simpson, with a rainbow all over your head! For will you please look at the hole left at the top of those tepees for the smoke to go through—yet it doesn't go through, now does it? So your blue eyes would be bluer than ever from weeping at the blue wood smoke. And what's to keep the rain from coming in where the smoke is supposed to go out? You'd love your dry carpets then, and your protecting ceiling!' Well, that's the trouble with mothers—they say so many sensible sentences one right on top of the other that you know all the wisdom of the world is tucked away under their top hair pins! For the day before New Year's it certainly did rain out the old, rain in the new! At first you could see the rain in nice slanting lines like somebody writing a letter—so I looked, and I don't believe much of it leaked through the smoke holes. But then the rain came down upright, like exclamation points, so I stopped minding Pop's being important enough to have a wood house; for I declare to goodness you could just hear the ground soaking up the water like regular all-day-suckers, and I got to thinking of all those earth floors in the tepees, so then I fell to admiring carpets a lot more!"

"Oh come Susie, turn off the rain! We've got *weather* right here at home, but we haven't got cradles in trees. Tell us that one next."

"Well, the first day I was walking along to see what I could see, when I nearly swallowed myself from surprise, and I simply *dashed* back to mother crying: 'Do lullabies ever come true?' 'Which one?'

she asked. So I grabbed her hand and took her to see Rock-a-bye Baby in the Tree-Top. For there was a baby, hanging from a tree, babbling and gabbling at squirrels and birds."

"How do you mean—*hanging*?"

"Well, there was a papoose board, with the top handle looped over a bough of the tree safe enough, and the papoose himself was fastened to the board, bound round and round and round with soft deer skins until nothing was left outside but his surprised little head. You should have seen the beads sewed in patterns on that baby's cradle, and the little bird feathers. The squaws wear their papooses strapped on their backs wherever they go, even to meetings. Pop told us that on that first day when he was sermoning in the big conference tent there were twenty-two papooses in the audience strapped in their cradles and propped against the walls for all the world like stained glass windows in a cathedral, 'Pictures of the little Saviours of the Indians!' mother said in her lovely worship voice, which made Pop kiss her, for of course that's just exactly what we all hope those little papooses can be some day. Then he wiped his eyes and said: 'I'm always praying our own babies can be that, too, my dear.' So then I felt awfully self-conscious; for although I'm so very old by this time they still can remember back and back to the time when I was a baby. And it's hard to have parents expecting you to be useful and important and all that."

The Children On Her Street looked hard at Sister Susie: "But you *are* good!" they said earnestly.

"But not saving good! not like parents are."

"Tell what the old chief said about your father
_____"

"And about how the boys were couriers and things."

"Well, some of the Indian boys my age wore perfectly enormous tags pinned on their fronts; why they blew around that tent all puffed up on account of those tags, as if they had been toy balloons all blown up as big as they blow. They were forever bouncing all over the place having a regular lark, passing hymn-books, running errands, fetching chairs. The squaws all sat on one side of the meeting, the braves on the other side. There was a Dog Committee too, but those boys had a hard job, because every single Indian family had brought at least one dog to this Christian pow-wow. They were like dirty rainbows! Yellow dogs and brown dogs and black dogs and white ones. There were barkers and biters, and growlers and howlers, and just plain zippers. The barkers barked whenever it was quietest; the growlers growled the minute the baby organ began to wheeze out the tunes; the howlers howled whenever the tenor let his voice go sailing up into the top tent poles; the zippers zipped up and down the aisles playing tag; and of course the biters snapped savagely at everybody. I didn't envy the Dog Committee?"

"And now tell us what the chief said about your father on New Year's Day, Susie."

So Susie found the precious paper and read what her mother remembered of the speech: "It was on New Year's morning that Big Chief Long Steps Over The

Desert stood up and said: 'Long Steps Over The Desert he no brought up to like white man. No! He remember story told by old squaws how, many moons ago, Lord God he make man. That was the first New Year's Day—yes? He scoop him up wet clay; he pat; he shape; he put it in oven. He pull it out of oven. 'Hump!' say Lord God, 'heap pale. Me not let him bake plenty long time.' That was way *white* man started on New Year's Day, many moons ago. Well, Lord God pat and shape more clay. Put him in oven; leave him plenty long this time. Pull him out, heap black and burned all over. 'Hump! Bake him *too* heap long time.' That was way *black* man started on New Year's Day, many moons ago. Well, Lord God pat and shape more clay; he bake him not too heap quick, not too heap long. But plenty right. Out come *red* man, heap nice color! But nobody, not even Lord God, knew Big Chief Pale Face Simpson *then*, many moons ago. God bake Big Chief Simpson plenty long time and make him heap right, like red man. He give him big heart; He give him big voice. Big heart make Pale Face Simpson make long steps over the desert to pow-wow like this. Big voice make Pale Face Simpson speak sweet love words. Sweet love words they fall into hard heart of Big Chief Long Steps Over The Desert. Nobody *hit* Big Chief; nobody *hurt* him; yet see—on New Year's Day, tears run down his face. Why? The voice of Pale Face Simpson speaking like voice of Lord God, sweet love words—make tears! Big Chief plenty happy over the tears, so he say to his squaw: 'What we give Pale

Face Simpson on New Year's Day to say Thank you, hey?' Well, Big Chief, *he* think. Squaw, *she* think. Then she say: 'Pale Face Simpson he got papoose. Winter come. We make him pants!' So now we got them done. You go get papoose, we put them on him."

Sister Susie giggled and giggled: "And I just want you to know that right in the middle of that big conference Our Baby had to be fetched and those darling pants had to be tried on him, yes, they did! Right there on the platform, with mother crying, and Pop laughing, and the dogs barking, and people stamping their feet, and all the twenty-two paposes beginning to cry. So then Our Baby cried too. And if I do say it as I shouldn't, he did it a lot louder than any other papoose. Even Pop noticed *that!*"

"And couldn't we see the pants, Susie. We'll be so careful of them."

So Susie brought them out—the softest of deer skin, they were, with beautiful bead work on them: and the design of the beads said something in sign language. For there were black bead feet walking over green bead prairies, up brown bead mountains, across blue bead rivers to a place where there were a great many brown bead tepees.

Sister Susie said breathlessly: "Isn't it exciting? You see, it's a picture of how Pop miled and miled all those wide prairies, and upped all those big mountains, and bridged all those deep rivers until he got to their pow-wow. But just in case he didn't quite understand they sewed this Bible verse in red and yellow bead letters which say: Romans 10:3. So I looked

it up and it reads: 'How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth glad tidings, that preacheth peace.' So now I'm just ever and ever so glad I belong to an important family with a missionary in it. For did you ever hear of anybody else getting pants for a papoose?"

But nobody ever had.

XVIII

LITTLE SQUAW SCARED OF HER WIGWAM

SHE was simply no good at her writing lesson. Such blots! Such upsidedown and crooked letters . . . over and over she had to copy the four horrid wretched words at the top of the page:

“EAST-WEST, HOME’S BEST”

until she could show at least one perfect line; but alas! she had reached the foot of the page and the words were more higgelty—piggelty than ever.

The Teacher looked at her reproachfully: “You aren’t trying!”

She gave a little discouraged grunt: “U’m—maybe.”

“Maybe what, my dear?”

“Maybe I could do better with nicer words.”

“But those are among the loveliest sentiments in the English language, child! Millions upon millions of people would tell you that!”

“U’m, maybe,” groaned the poor little girl unhappily. Just then someone in a nearby seat plucked the Teacher’s skirt gently and whispered: “White Woman! She’s a little squaw—scared—of—her—wigwam, you know.”

And would you believe it? When she turned the

next page of her copy book where there was an even longer sentence:

“HONESTY IS THE BEST POLICY”

Little Squaw Scared Of Her Wigwam wrote an almost perfect page the first time, improving with each new line. So then the Teacher said to herself: “There’s more in this than meets the eye!” and she set out to hear the whole story which was sad but true.

For it seems that just before Little Squaw Scared Of Her Wigwam had come far over the desert to live at our school she had gone to ask some questions of another girl who had just graduated from this same school, and it was alarming to find her in tears. Real tears. Big ones! The kind that shook her to pieces.

. . .

“Boo-hoo!” she was sobbing. “Boo-hoo! Boo-hoo!” It was simply dreadful to behold; so the little visitor said solemnly: “You tell me why you do this, Girl Who Has Been To School?”

And Girl Who Had Been To School said between her sobs: “Boo-hoo! It’s *because* I have been to school, boo-hoo!”

This needed a lot of explaining, for surely it must be wonderful fun to live in a school with dozens of other girls, to read things from books, to learn to do new things with one’s hands.

“Boo-hoo! I learn to use the broom and sweep the corners clean. I like it! I love it! That broom and I, we heap big friends. Boo-hoo, boo-hoo! But I come back to the wigwam of my mother, and she

does not like my heap big friend. She throws it out the door. She is cross about brooms. She says they are silly. Boo-hoo! It is the white man's foolishness. I scrub and scour all over the place, and she does not like that, boo-hoo! So she scolds me some more. She is always scolding whatever I do in the new way! I cook strange things in a pot, like we eat them at school—good! U'm'm! But no, she will not eat! She says it is nonsense. Heap much trouble! It is not the red man's way, but the white man's. I clean my teeth, up and down like this, with my nice little brush; the whole family they stand around to hold their sides and laugh. I seem so funny. So then I hang my head for shame at being so different, and I run outdoors. Boo-hoo, boo-hoo! It is so beautiful at school, copying the Teacher. But back at home, no one knows the Teacher, one copies the mother. She has not been to school. She does not care. She likes her own way. It makes me so unhappy. I want to die. So you will do well little girl, to be scared of your wigwam!"

For hours and hours they talked, until Little Squaw Scared Of Her Wigwam knew the whole story,—how the real loneliness began when you came home from school and your father went to meet your train at the faraway station. He would hoist you up on a burro, and then take the leading reins and walk stolidly ahead of you over the miles and miles of prairie between the station and your home. Jog; jog; jog; jog! There you would sit with your bundles and your school-books hugged tight in your arms. You had forgotten how lonely the prairies could be—so flat and so wide

and so bare and so bleak, a few little scrub bushes here and there. You wanted to cry! Or perhaps you just wanted to speak to someone. So you said: "Are you glad I am home, father?"

Your father gave a grunt, and plodded steadily onward. You patted the burro for comfort. He wriggled his coat as if to shake you off. Well, well! nothing seemed very responsive. But there remained your mother, surely she would be glad to see you. She was glad! Until she found you were turning out so very differently from what she had remembered you to be. And then she was cross.

All this the new Teacher learned that day. She kept on learning it in all the days and weeks which followed; so that whenever she was asked to speak to the Indian women she told them a fable, it ran like this: How once upon a time the Fish became very much worried about the little Crabs——

"They walk so very crookedly!" the Fish exclaimed. "Let's have a little class for them." So they had a class. Over and over they taught those little Crabs just how to walk straight: "This way!" they said. And the Crabs seemed able to do it that day; but the next day they would be sidling along every-which-way, just as badly as before. So that it was only natural for the Fish to grow so discouraged that they decided to hold a pow-wow. It was the kind called a conference. And they started a methods class to discuss how little Crabs could be taught to walk properly. Whereupon a perfect whale of an old Fish stood up and said politely: "Ladies and gentlemen, it seems to me you are ex-

pecting an almost impossible miracle of those poor little Crabs! For you have them only such a very short time in school; aren't you forgetting that all the rest of the time they see their mothers and fathers walking so crookedly at home? What's the good of a school if the parents and the teachers don't work together?"

The Indian mothers looked at one another and nodded. So that to this very day in that particular tribe one of them will often be heard to say: "Indian with girl at school must make heap big change. Indian must not walk crooked when girl come home from school."

And that is why one Valentine's Day, a few years later, Little Squaw Scared Of Her Wigwam mailed an envelope to her faraway Teacher. When it was opened out fell a cardboard heart colored red, and on it in her very best handwriting were the words:

EAST-WEST, HOME'S BEST

So then the Teacher knew that something very lovely was happening across the desert—something to do with hearts, and hearths, and brooms, and scrubbing brushes. And even with *names*. "Dear me," she thought, "I do wonder what they call Little Squaw Scared Of Her Wigwam now? For they must have changed it to something more appropriate! I do wonder what?"

Perhaps you are wondering, yourself! But where would the mystery of a Valentine be if people signed their names?

XIX

WRAPPING PAPER ONLY AND A WALK-ABOUT SAINT

José knew all about saints, or rather, he thought he did. For were they not statues of people who died long ago? Good people far beyond the average goodness? And did not their statues sit in niches in the great, dark, cool cathedrals, with gold haloes over their stone heads? And did you not burn many candles at their shrines on feast days? Or sometimes, when you yourself were very sick, did not your mother hang a little present on the carved arm of your own patron saint, and pray: "Now please, Saint So and So, most blessed of all saints, be pleased to make my little José well again!" Which was all he knew about saints. You can see for yourself that the last thing in the world he expected any saint to do was—*to walk around!* How could they, being stone?

Indeed, he could hardly believe his own eyes when he saw one; yet up and down a long room this saint went, bending over beds where children were lying in great pain. José saw that saint feed them something with a silver spoon, and gently lay her cool white hand upon their burning foreheads—so gently that they sighed from sheer relief, and smiled, and went to sleep. A saint above all saints, José decided, trembling for

fear he wasn't worthy himself to have her bending over him . . . yet here she came . . . "*This will be something to brag about to the neighbors!*" he thought . . . then those dear, cool fingers lay on his forehead and that smile . . . what saint in a cathedral could do this, with only lips of stone? "José," his new saint whispered, "You are better. The fever is all gone. I'm going to call your mother. She has tried in vain to be allowed to see you all this week, and is waiting outside now."

Presently in came his mother, her old mantilla over her head. Scowling she was and jabbering bitterly to the saint, "This boy, you have been bewitching him? Oh, the neighbors warned me! He seems made over new—yesterday so limp, today so strong. But it is too quick, they tell me. Maybe some spell has been cast, yes?"

"More likely just soup and milk and eggs and soap-suds," smiled the saint into José's eyes, and José smiled back into hers.

But his mother was suspicious, she looked him over here and there, she even poked him cautiously: "José, are they really feeding you well? Are they treating you right?"

"But yes, my mother, yes!" he nodded. "This saint, now, how is she not good to me! It is amazing, her goodness!"

"*Saint, indeed!*" gasped his mother and crossed herself piously, for whoever heard of a saint with only a white cap for a halo? Her poor boy, he was under some spell, to be sure. He was! He was! And would

you believe it?—the frightened woman insisted on taking him home then and there, away from white linen saints with white linen haloes?

Now, of course, it was very bad for José to be taken home so soon, and the nurse was more than sorry to see him go before he was well. So she came over daily to his pink adobe house, and poking her head in the doorway she would make some such remark as this: "Today he needs an egg. Since you fear to have him eat our eggs, at least you will let him eat eggs of your own. Is it not so?"

"But where have I an egg to my name?" asked the mother of José. "Have I a hen? Or a chicken pecking in my yard?"

The nurse smiled: "There is always the market," she said, and departed.

Of course it was a quiet little sentence, that: *The market! There is always the market!* For how was she to know that in the market sat the merchant—who—was—cross? How was she to know that he was cross because someone had given him a Book? How was she to know that he had feared this Book? How was she to know that he feared this Book so greatly that he decided to burn it up? How was she to know that he was far too economical a man to burn anything, especially when the anything had hundreds upon hundreds of leaves just made for wrapping paper for a merchant? And how was she to guess that such wrapping paper was the very size and shape in which to wrap an egg for José's luncheon?

Yet that is how things work sometimes, when nurses

walk off praying to the Saviour: "Dear Lord, do bless this little José, and open wide the eyes of his very foolish mother." For who would have guessed that God's answer to that prayer would have been wrapping paper only? Who, indeed!

For José was very forlorn at home. Having become accustomed to a Walk-about saint he missed her frightfully, and when his mother came home with a package held gingerly in her hand he begged for the thrill of unwrapping it, and when he found printing on the wrapping paper you can see for yourself that it was the nicest kind of a treat when the printing seemed to be telling a story. Slowly he spelled out the words . . . and the day slipped by faster than he liked . . .

But there was a terrific disappointment. For the story was about a monstrous giant and a plucky little shepherd boy who took his sling and five smooth pebbles and was evidently about to do something remarkable when alas! alas! the end of the page was reached. And who knew the rest of the story. Who? Who? The only possible hope lay in another egg. He tried to look prodigiously well and enormously hungry. He smacked his lips. He licked them. He wiggled them.

"My mother," he begged with deep design, "eggs make me very strong. Another egg from the same market man would make a new boy of me! But you must be sure to get it from the same market man. The very same."

"The very same!" she promised, flying off to help make José strong. She'd show those missionaries a thing or two. She guessed her eggs had power in them,

too! José should get fat and well, so he should; and if eggs helped, why what was one egg more or less? And presently the naughty José was unwrapping another egg, wrapped in another paper with another story on it. All about a man thrown into a lion's den, with not a lion eager to bite him! Now, why? Why? Such astonishing lions—he longed to know more, but the end of the page was reached with the most important sentence of all cut exactly in half . . . whoever heard of anything so maddening?

"These eggs, my mother! They make me so strong!" he cried.

And his very innocent mother beamed from ear to ear as she wiped away the yellow egg-stain from around his lips. She was getting ahead of that nurse! Bah! He should have an egg for his breakfast, her José should . . . From the same stylish grocer, whose wrapping paper all at the same price proved so very amusing to José.

In a few days the friendly nurse again came poking her nice head inside the door. "Excuse me," she began politely, "but one of the simple things which kept José so comfortable over at our hospital was his morning bath. All over, you know; with plenty of soap and a lot of warm water. Excuse my impoliteness, but you have the soap on hand?"

This nurse! Always hinting.

"But, of course," said the mother of José in her grandest, coolest tones. When she had gone, however, José sighed, "Regarding the soap; it is so very nice, my mother. It makes bubbles all up and down the

body, bubbles which it is fun to rub off, then you feel very cool. You sleep! Just this minute, how hot, how sticky, how unhappy I feel. With soap, how cool would I be!"

You have already guessed how this would send her scampering off to her particular merchant for a cake of soap, for it must never be said of her that she could not keep her boy as comfortable as those missionaries had done. She'd show them! And the soap was wrapped in printed paper, which José read with bated breath—the story of a man named Paul, a city wall, a basket let down to help him escape at night secretly. Thrilling! But why? Where? When? There was not enough of the story told on his sheet. It was too bad that soap showed signs of lasting more than one day. "You should make many suds, more of them, everywhere, my mother," he begged. "I am not half done!"

"But it would be to waste the soap to use more," she said. "Already it is an extravagance."

But if new wrapping paper could not arrive with the new soap, it could and it did arrive with new eggs, until José had become a treasure-trove of unfinished stories. *Who? Why? When?* buzzed all day long in his brain. Then came the astonishing morning when a certain set of words danced right off the page and seemed to wink directly at him, "*called to be saints*," he read in utter astonishment. And, judging by the other words it very much looked as if this meant him, José. Could God be expecting new saints? *Live saints?* In South America? In his own particular

town? Weren't the saints in the great cool cathedrals enough, must there be new ones, walk-about ones, like his own particular white linen nurse with her white linen halo? And if he was supposed to be a saint, how in the world was he to begin? Plainly this was something one must ask of persons in authority, and as far as he was concerned the egg merchant was the one supreme authority. So off he marched with his question.

The merchant was still cross. In fact, he was crosser than ever. Things were going decidedly wrong, and José simply made them worse when he said, politely: "If you please, señor, I have been reading your stories with interest. But this one about saints I do not understand, is it possible that God wishes me to . . ."

But the merchant was stamping his foot: "Leave me! Be gone! This is ridiculous, scandalous, awful! I hate that Book—I cut it up for wrapping paper only—I get rid of it, I think—yet every few hours a customer comes back: 'I have been reading your stories,' they say to me. Bah! Poof! Outrageous! *My* stories, indeed; *mine!* Why, I hate those stories. I detest them. I did not want the Book in my possession. Yet when I give it away it comes back to me! Every few hours it keeps coming back."

José was a little discouraged. He had so dreadfully *loved* the stories. How could anyone detest them? There was only one other person in town fit to answer his questions, so he went off to his walk-about saint.

"If you please, there is a question in my head. Do you suppose that I am, perhaps, called to be a saint?"

Now it must be told in all secrecy that our nurse wanted to laugh very heartily, for anyone more unlike a saint in looks than José it would have been hard to find in all of South America—very tattered as to clothes, barefoot, dusty; just one great wide hat he seemed to be, with two spindly legs twinkling below it. Not a saint in looks! But never has a missionary ever laughed at questions such as these, and José was invited to be seated.

“José, it is a fact. You really *are* called to be a saint.”

“Alas!” groaned the saint-to-be, “Will it take years to learn?”

“Not at all, you can begin right now. A saint is simply someone blessed of God. And it’s not nearly as impossible to be a saint at twelve years of age as you seem to think. There was another Boy-of-Twelve who knew just how; He said one day: ‘I must be about my Father’s business,’ and that’s really all the secret there is to it, José. You can read in this Book what He did.”

José took the Bible. He thumbed its pages. “It looks like the merchant’s wrapping paper,” he said excitedly. “Why, it *is* the merchant’s wrapping paper! Isn’t it strange? The same size of paper, and about some of the same people. Jesus! Paul! Daniel! I’d give anything to have this Book for a while.”

“You can have it forever,” smiled the nurse. “I will give it to you, if you’ll first explain what you mean by wrapping paper.”

José explained. The nurse thought a moment,

deeply. Then she said: "José, do you really want to be a saint? Do you really want to be blessed of God?"

"Yes," he answered earnestly. Another boy-of-twelve, evidently eager, too, to be about the Father's business, if he only knew what he could do.

"Then I can tell you what to do, José! You say the merchant is provoked at all the inquiries from his customers about the wrapping paper stories, people like yourself who want to know how certain stories end and what they mean. Well, José, suppose you found out who these people are? Suppose you told them about me? Suppose you said I had a Book with the *entire* story in it? Suppose you invited them to come here on Sunday while I told them all they wanted to know? Would it not be carrying on God's business in this town?"

"I guess it would!" the new saint answered. And that is how it came to pass that a new walk-about saint began work in South America that very day, by simply saying: "Come! Listen! There's someone who has all the unfinished parts of the wrapping paper stories in a Book. Come! Hear!"

And the merchant who had been so cross that he wanted to destroy the Book had advertised it more widely than any missionary could possibly have done in a short time.

*God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform.*

For who of us would have chosen a cross merchant or wrapping paper or a little sick boy-of-twelve?

XX

CATARINA'S NINE TALES

IF ever a little girl wanted to do something, that little girl was Catarina; and since she only wanted to go to Sunday school, you may be surprised that she was not allowed to go, especially as she was perfectly well, the weather was clear, and the Sunday school was being held only a very little distance away, right out under the shadow of a great palm-tree. Catarina could see the boys and girls gathering; she could see the teacher hanging the picture-scroll against the tree-trunk.

"Oh, *madremia*," she begged, "I pray thee let me go just for a little while. See, I have been twice already, and it has never hurt me; let me go *three* times, I beg thee!"

But the truth of the matter was that Catarina's mother hated Sunday schools. "No, no, Catarina, it is not safe to go. Something in my bones tells me those stories will upset our family. So run away, child, thou art in the way when there is food to prepare."

So two big tears dripped sadly from Catarina's eyes as she went out into the sunshine, where her father was sitting, lazily sunning his toes and blinking his eyes open and shut, open and shut. And the first thing she knew, Catarina was telling him how heartbroken she

was and he was saying: "Come now, am I not thy father? Then run along and listen to the stories, little one. Yes, go *ten* times; until thou hast a new story for every one of thy ten fingers."

So Catarina lost not a moment in skipping over to the crowd of boys and girls under the palm-tree, where she listened with all her ears. Catarina's mother did not like it, but her father said cheerfully, "Oh, well, she wants to, so let her go!"

So Sunday after Sunday Catarina went, until she had been nine times. It was exactly as if she had a Bible right at the tips of her nine fingers, for she named a new finger every Sunday, and now only the tenth finger was empty, waiting—waiting for the next new story. But there came a sad Thursday when her family moved to a distant barrio. By the way, surely you would like to learn enough Spanish to know that "barrio" means a village. And the new barrio looked exactly like the old one, only—can you guess? *There was no Sunday school.*

Catarina asked all her little new neighbors, but not a single child in all that town had ever heard of such a thing. So Catarina told them what it was: how there had to be a teacher, and this teacher would hang a picture against a tree-trunk and tell stories about the pictures. "I that speak unto you know *nine* of those stories myself!" Catarina said proudly. "See, nine!" And she held up her two hands and wiggled every one of her fingers except the tenth.

"Then tell *us* the stories," begged the little new

neighbors. "Oh, do tell us! Let's have this thing called a Sunday school; right away, let's begin."

So they sat down under a palm-tree and Catarina hung a piece of paper on the tree. "This is the Sunday school picture," she said. "We'll just have to *pretend*, of course." Indeed, it took quite a little pretending when there wasn't a single drawing on that entire piece of paper. But Catarina laid her finger on a certain spot and said: "Now, here's where the hillside ought to be. And all over the hillside you must make believe that there are sheep, huddled together, sound asleep. Shepherds are sitting here, and it's night. It's ever and ever so dark, until suddenly up in this corner of the picture there is a big light, right here in the sky, and now what do you suppose made that shining light?"

Not a single little Filipino knew, so Catarina whispered: "Why, it was *angels*! Oh, a whole lot of angels, and they came down to tell the shepherds that the Lord Jesus was born."

"Who is this Lord Jesus?" a little girl asked, so Catarina explained. And *that* was her first finger story!

"We like finger stories," the children cried. "Tell us another."

So Catarina told story after story, the very ones you like best yourself—about three Wise-men who came over the desert on camels with presents for the little Lord Jesus; about how the Lord Jesus fed five thousand people from what was in the lunch-basket of one surprised little boy; about how the Lord Jesus healed the sick at sunset time; and so through all her nine fingers, a story for each. There came a time when she

had told them so often that almost any little Filipino child could tell which story belonged on which finger! The first they called her Angel Finger, the next her Wise-men Finger, the next her Lunch-Basket Finger, the next her Sick Finger, and so on. Indeed, they knew the dear stories backward and forward. But always there was Catarina's empty little tenth finger that had no story at all!

Then one day our missionaries came to that town, and no sooner had Mrs. Missionary started telling the Bible stories to the women and children than a certain small boy, named Alfonso, cried: "Oh, that's Catarina's sixth finger, senora!" Of course Mrs. Missionary could not imagine what he was talking about, so she started to tell another story, when a small excited girl called out: "Senora, Senora, we know how it ends, for it's Catarina's fourth finger!"

So *then* Mrs. Missionary stopped and asked, "Who is Catarina? And what is all this about her fingers?"

Whereupon Catarina came shyly forward, and, holding up her hand, said: "I have nine Bible fingers, senora; but, alas, my tenth finger is all empty——"

Yet when Mrs. Missionary heard all that Catarina had done in that town, she saw that Catarina's tenth finger had been a Bible story all by itself; for, perhaps, you will remember that just before the Lord Jesus went back to heaven he said to his friends, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." And Mrs. Missionary thought that Catarina had obeyed this command about as well as any little girl could, for

the minute she moved into the new barrio hadn't she begun spreading the story of Jesus? Indeed, it makes me wonder whether you and I are remembering to use our fingers for the Lord Jesus, too!

XXI

A PINCH OF PICKLED TEA

IT WAS the most embarrassing problem in the world. To pinch or not to pinch—that was the question! For there stood the messenger with his cup of pickled tea, inviting you to the Naming-Party. And, of course, you wanted to go; oh, dreadfully you wanted to go. After all the fuss and furore and fine words you certainly longed to lay eyes on the upsetting new baby; and yet, was it wise to go? Necessary? Safe? Best? Was Ma Tit going? Or Maung Kyaw Tha? Absurdly enough that was the way Ma Tit and Maung Kyaw Tha had just been debating, themselves, about *you*, while the poor messenger stood balancing first on one foot and then on the other, waiting, waiting, waiting . . . patiently. Impatiently. Fretting. Fuming. Mercy on us, had none of these ridiculous persons ever been invited to a Naming-Party before? Didn't they know what to do? In case they were really ignorant, the messenger flourished his cup of pickled tea under their noses, suggesting politely (and later, even impolitely) "Would you kindly eat a pinch of tea?"

But that, of course, was the very trouble: to eat or not to eat? For if one ate, one accepted the invitation and nobody knew whether to accept. Yet there was that very special baby to be named; undoubtedly

a baby as different from other babies as day is from night. Fancy missing such a sight!

Which was all a perfect joke. For he was just exactly like a hundred other brownies in a hundred other houses in town. But nobody knew this, fortunately, and there stood the messenger with his pickled tea and his exasperated face. There, too, stood each guest-to-be, gingerly, timidly deciding that yes, he would eat a pinch of tea; or, yes, *she* would; until everybody invited had finally accepted, much to the amusement of the messenger. That baby! Was he really so special? And why?

Why, indeed?

Ma Tin E could have told you, the little "Miss Cool Thought," whose thoughts had been anything but cool for weeks and weeks, ever since the astonishing People-Who-Ate-Relatives had come to town. For it was these Relative-Eaters who had caused all the trouble. They were the oddest persons, with white faces; and the man Eater had little glass windows fastened across his face for his eyes to look through. Both he and the lady Eater wore their feet hidden inside curious coops, which came down kerplunk at every step.

"Probably they haven't five toes, like us, but one solid toe," Ma Tin E had said, shuddering.

"Now just fancy!" shuddered Ma Chit—Miss Love. But she had no love in her just then, for the new comers had a box in their oxcart with a strange, big, black, hard lily jutting out of the top. Suddenly out of this lily came the most astounding sounds—music: *a woman singing*. It was terrifying; what sort of a

woman could she be? With such a big voice surely she was big herself, yet cruelly squeezed and stuffed inside the box, with the lid clamped down. One was sorry for her . . . but the music was enchanting. Everybody had to come running, to hear. . . . Everybody had to stand around curiously, to watch. . . .

Then the man with the windows in front of his eyes talked. About God. Quite as if there were only one. It was amusing, this, for everyone knew better. Yet he said he had crossed wet oceans and hot deserts and dangerous jungles to bring this news. Everyone listened, with half an eye always on the perplexing box with the lily jutting out of the top, because in an unguarded moment that imprisoned woman might come breaking forth. After his talk the man lifted the box lid and laid a black plate inside. Whatever the invisible food may have been the woman evidently liked it, for instantly she lifted up her voice in a very gay song.

"She doesn't mind it, in there," said Ma Chit.

"Poof!" said Ma Tin E. For Miss Cool Thought had no cool thoughts about the undesirability of being squeezed into anything that size.

Now all this was upsetting enough, but the next day more cruel news yet began spreading through the town: these white people eat our relatives! And this, of course, was the last straw. One could stand unknown women compressed in small boxes; but relatives were relatives, and it was risky business letting them be unhappy or tampered with after they had died, as everyone knew.

To be exact, this is what everyone knew: that when persons died, their spirits entered into animals or birds or insects—for the religion called Buddhism teaches this, especially; and one must, therefore, be careful never to hurt any animal, any bird, any insect, since they might be one's dead aunts, uncles, grandparents. And yet these dangerous newcomers had been seen placidly eating a—*chicken*. Unbelievable! Monstrous! Surely not true!

But it was true—for Maung Byu had it from Maung Tha Hla, and he had it straight from Ma Schwe Pan, and she had it from Maung Kyi. And Maung Kyi had seen the chicken with his own eyes.

From that very moment the town was in an uproar. Rumors everywhere. Suspicious everywhere. Dreads. Doubts. As thick as spatter. It was an enormous relief to everyone when it was told that the Relative-Eaters were packing up and about to leave.

Ma Tin E capered for joy. And then she heard the staggering news; her mother, her very own mother was actually going away with them. Her mother who hadn't been anywhere for such a long, long time because of her terrible lameness. *Cool Thought* was not at all the name for this upset and excited girl, flying around in a hundred directions at once.

"My mother, tell me it is not true? Yes? With Relative-Eaters?"

"Little one, do not worry," the mother said, in a tired low voice, "you know how sick and useless I have been for years. Have I ever left our house? Well, we had supposed it was evil spirits. We had supposed

it was because the gods were angry. And now these kind white people say that over the hills, in their town, there is a building with beds. On the beds lie people even sicker than I. There is a doctor there especially to make sick people well. The lame walk. The blind see. It is wonderful to hear! I must not miss the chance, my child; and when your father comes home from his elephant hunt in the jungle you must explain how wonderful a chance I had. Too good to miss."

Ma Tin E was simply speechless. It was all like a bad, bad dream; her mother being lowered by ropes from their house-on-stilts, everybody standing around in high disapproval.

"You'll be sorry for this!"

"Now you *will* have evil spirits, woman!"

It was a dreadful day. Dreadful. That oxcart creaking slowly away, leaving Ma Tin E up in her house-on-stilts, alone. The very floor seemed to have dropped out of life! The roof seemed to have clattered about her head! A mother gone off with Relative-Eaters . . . horrors . . . they might clap her inside some black box . . . they might feed her from a black plate . . . she, too, might begin to sing . . . dear mother, who could sing so beautifully, sweet little crooning, monotonous songs made up on the spur of the moment to serve as lullabies, all about rubies and diamonds and dear cool thoughts. "Cool Thoughts." Poor Ma Tin E.

It was no trick at all to keep house in the House-on-Stilts. You ran up and down the ladder quite importantly, the neighbors all eyes, of course. You poked

everything undesirable through cracks in the floor. It was easy enough to do all this sweeping and cooking, but once every day Ma Tin E became woefully embarrassed.

For there at the foot of the ladder would be the fat Buddhist priest in his yellow robes, with all the little yellow-robed "Ko-yin" boys from the temple, with their begging bowls, come to beg food for the priest. It pleased Buddha to have you feed his priest; but food began to be so scarce——

"I'm sorry," Ma Tin E would have to call down. "I'm sorry, but there isn't even any food for me now, so I haven't anything."

I regret to say that the Ko-yin boys, one and all, poked out their red tongues at her, and made cutting remarks: "She has a mother off somewhere with Relatives-Eaters! Bah, it is funny—no mother, no father, no food. What will Buddha think of this girl, anyhow? Morning after morning with no contribution for the priest!"

Ma Tin E had no cool thoughts for this occasion, either. Those wretched boys! She thought the priest might have said something reproving, but he had pulled his fan out of his collar and was hiding his face—a woman was passing, you see. A priest would not want to pollute his thoughts by seeing a woman. So the boys said what they pleased. And they pleased too much. Entirely too much.

Ma Tin E cried. No, there were no cool thoughts for her, that day, nor the next, nor the next. Neither were there any when her father came home. He was

startled, angry, furious, afraid. A week or so went by, and his next jungle trip came due. Off he went, leaving behind a small daughter with very hot little thoughts.

And then, one unbelievable day, her mother came back. A new mother. Smiling. Happy. And a new baby. It was all vastly exciting.

"Ma Tin E," said she, for the hundredth time, "those Christians are so good. It was such a simple thing with my leg, just a 'nerve' and a strained 'muscle.' I did not know I had a nerve and muscle! They were so kind to me. Their hands were so soft. Their words were so loving. I would say: 'I am poor, I cannot repay you?' They would say: 'Our God did not send us to do this kind of thing for pay. We do it for love.'"

Ma Tin E felt a deliciously cool little thought go floating through her mind, "*For love!*" How very wonderful—to do something like this for mother, for love. To give her back the power to walk. And then later, the baby. Such a baby, too.

"Yes, *isn't* he a baby?" her mother cried. "He's a Jesus Christ baby, they told me, and I'm going to bring him up special. But first of all there is something I want you to do. I want you to sell my lone-gyee (skirt), it is red, it is pretty, someone will want it. Then I can send the money to my friends. I feel I must say 'Thank you!' Take it, my child." She untucked the material from around her waist and handed it to Ma Tin E.

It was a very cheerful-looking lone-gyee and Ma

Tin E had an amusing time with it in the marketplace. By this time everyone knew who she was, and the fact that her mother was selling her skirt was immensely interesting. Questions buzzed left and right, Why? Why?

"To pay for the baby, really," said Ma Tin E.

So the news of the Baby-Who-Cost-a-Skirt began to spread all over town. People grew very curious about that baby. Imagine! Born in a white person's house . . . far away. . . . They wanted to see the baby, to hear about everything. And it was just at this time that the messenger came around with his cup of pickled tea. Instantly people who had been curious became a little cautious; was it quite safe to go? Were others going?

But as you already know they all took their pinch of tea, eventually, accepting the invitation to the Naming-Party. And eventually each of them brought presents of money or jewels to be tossed into a jar of water, quite as one would do for any other baby. Moreover, the baby looked quite like any other baby! The usual dimples and toes and smiles and big brown eyes.

They bathed the child in the jar of water where the presents still lay, and this was all so customary that people began to think: "After all, this isn't such a risky experience!"

The feast was a good one, and everybody had plenty to eat. Then an old man stood up and solemnly repeated a blessing over the astonished baby, wishing him one hundred years of happiness. This, too, was usual. People began to feel much less uneasy, espe-

cially when they saw a cotton string tied from baby's wrist to a dish with money arranged in a circle on top of some rice. For, dear me, *this* was done for every baby in town! A Jesus Christ baby was no different at all. But wait a minute . . . wait a minute . . . the time has just come to name the baby, and what is happening?

A Bible Woman was happening! She was very little and old and lovely. "I have come all the way to tell you about this special baby. It is to be special because it is never to chew betel nuts or smoke cheroots or worship idols or fear an evil spirit. For over in our hospital this child's mother met Jesus Christ. You will do well to watch her and copy her, from now on. She will be happier than any of you. She will be kinder, unafraid. I will tell you why."

She talked for a long time about the Lord Jesus. His birth. His life. His death. His daily presence in each heart in all the world. His love for little children. "It was said of Him, by a wise man of old, long, long years before He was born: 'His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' And now, I ask you, what are you going to name this baby? This Jesus Christ baby?"

There was a little silence. You could have heard a pin drop! There lay the baby with the string going from its wrist to the dish of money and rice. The baby's mother looked around in a friendly fashion: "We will call him Maung Nyein," she said softly.

Everybody nodded.

It was a good name! For Nyein meant Peace.

Suddenly the old, old man did a curious thing. He laid a piece of gold on the rice where the coins were arranged. "Call him Golden Peace," he begged, "such a special baby."

Everybody smiled. From lip to lip the newer, finer name was whispered, "Maung Nyein Shwe! It is a good name."

"And a good baby," chuckled Ma Tin E, all her thoughts suddenly cool thoughts, no matter how hot the weather.

For Christians were safe people. Delightful people. The kind of people who made crippled mothers walk. Who put peace into a home where there had been no peace. The kind of people who had schools for little girls who could not read. Such little girls as she, and Ma Chit. Life was suddenly more interesting to everybody.

There was a sudden smile up everybody's sleeve! Imagine? They had almost been afraid to take that pinch of tea . . . but evidently Relative-Eaters were not as much to be dreaded as one feared.

"You see," explained this Bible-Woman-person pleasantly, "there is a special Jesus Christ town where the spirits of our relatives sit down in peace forever, instead of entering the bodies of animals to pester us."

"La! La!" babbled the guests, unbelievably. But if it only were true, how wonderful!

One wishes more missionaries could go riding through more Burman towns with victrolas, towns which are still waiting and wondering and fearful. . . .

XXII

CROCODILE TEARS

IT all began with an egg. Which sounds rather like a recipe. But if it were in some cook book, how you would stare to read of any wedding cake with such impossible ingredients: Take three large crocodiles, dip in water until brown; add one white camel; drop in the yoke of one egg, well scrambled; moisten with crocodile tears; set in the sun to bake. Serve at the end of a wedding breakfast.

It sounds rather like some wicked fairy tale or an unusually bad nightmare. From beginning to end Ibrahim admits he felt enchanted, but he could hardly be blamed for this when his morning started with finding that astonishing egg—how he had shuddered and shivered! For if anyone knew how eggs ought to look it was Ibrahim, who began every day of his life with a search in the straw, first hopefully, then frantically, for nobody had such provoking hens as his. So few eggs. But always before, these had been cream-colored or tannish brown; whereas on this especial morning there had been only one egg and it was—*blue*. A gay sky blue! Ibrahim was simply horrified and stared in dismay at his favorite hen.

“Yours?” he accused her. “How could you?”

“Cut-cut-cut-ca-da-cut!” she cackled, indifferently,

turning on her heel, as if blue eggs were quite an every day matter. But Ibrahim dashed indoors to show his mother and it was then that they saw the extra surprise: *words on the egg*.

"Well!" gasped Ibrahim.

"Well!" gasped his mother.

But you could see from their faces that it was not well at all—what, a blue egg? An egg which said something? Why, it was terrible.

"What shall I do?" asked Ibrahim.

"What indeed?" asked his mother. So that they would have gotten nowhere at all if it had not been for his father. His father was clever. "It has entered my head that the daughter of Abou Ben Idim marries to-day and I owe her father a debt on the last camel I bought of him. Now it is not healthy to have debts with such as Abou Ben Idim, he knows too well how to squeeze and squeeze and squeeze such a poor fellow as I. But I ask you, what money have I to give Abou Ben Idim, with all these empty stomachs in my home? So an egg, a blue egg, an egg which says something to his daughter, will be a pleasant surprise to all concerned. Therefore when Ibrahim rides in to town to-day with his bundles of straw he shall take the blue egg to Abou Ben Idim's house with my compliments." It was a long speech, and the family was deeply impressed.

"Well!" said Ibrahim.

"Well!" said his mother.

And this time everything really did seem well. So the straw was balanced on top of the camel, Ibrahim

was balanced on top of the straw, and the egg was balanced around Ibrahim's neck in a corner of his loose shirt. The camel arose in the only way camels have of rising—front legs jerking upward entirely separate from back legs, so that both the load and Ibrahim lurched wildly . . . "Mind that egg!" warned Ibrahim's mother. And he minded it.

In fact he minded it so devotedly that the whole ride became an agony. For suppose this jolt or that jolt should break the egg. He ached over every step the poor awkward camel took. "Couldn't you walk a little more smoothly?" he begged. But the camel snorted indignantly: the idea, telling him how to walk! After all the deserts he had crossed! After all the caravans he had led! The very idea. Was Ibrahim crazy? Ibrahim who had ridden to town, day after day after day with never a single remark.

The camel grew positively irritated, and broke into a run, which meant that both the egg and Ibrahim began bouncing around on the loose straw in the most perilous fashion. And the more Ibrahim pleaded for a slower gait, the faster the camel went surging ahead until they came to the brink of the shallow river. Exactly as usual the camel began to splash into the water and wade out toward the other shore, when suddenly, alas. . . .

Disaster!

When least expected, Ibrahim found himself sitting waist-deep in water, facing an absolutely gigantic mouth which opened wider and wider the longer he stared. And the mouth did not belong to the camel

by any means, for the camel was backing further and further away along the bank, giving a most peculiar series of squeaks, which meant disgust and a few other disgruntled states of mind. Perhaps even a warning to Ibrahim, for the mouth which continued to gape so invitingly belonged to a crocodile. Quite a grandfather of a fellow, who had been lying hidden in the water and had thought it great sport to snap at the camel's ankles. Exceedingly damp and exceedingly startled, poor Ibrahim arose hastily and began to back off as he saw a second crocodile rear out of the river, followed by a third, all three of them coming toward him with a stealthy slip and slide, their mouths opening hungrily at the sight of such a tempting meal.

The Tempting Meal removed himself further yet, his heart beating suspiciously fast. Mercy! Now this had never once happened before. Therefore, "It's that egg!" he sighed, and touched the egg gingerly. *Still whole!* Then with stern authority, he ordered the camel to sit down, which meant a series of separate lettings down of front legs and back legs. Ibrahim climbed up on the hay. "G' dap!" he ordered, and the camel solemnly began jerking frontwards and backwards with such lurchings that Ibrahim teetered dangerously on his uncertain perch.

Presently they went zig-zagging in and out of narrow streets until in a certain lane of blind houses there was a certain door. Ibrahim knocked. His heart began beating fast again, for he was rehearsing his speech.

A voice through the grating in the door said, "Who is it?"

"Ibrahim, the camel driver's son. May Allah be praised, it has come to my father's ears that the daughter of Abou Ben Idim marries today, and I, Ibrahim, am the bearer of a gift."

The door opened a crack. Ibrahim inserted his body through the opening. The court was dark and gloomy at this side, but not too dark to make out the form of Abou Ben Idim striding toward him. "Out of my way," this important gentleman ordered.

"Master," said the servant, "this lad says he brings a wedding gift from the camel driver."

"The camel driver?" roared the master. "That thief! That robber! He takes my camels and never pays for them, the old swallawag. I'll teach his son how to bring wedding presents. What have you, anyhow?" And he laid ten iron fingers on Ibrahim's shoulders and dug them into the flesh.

Now Ibrahim knew from experience with important personages that there was only one wise thing to do: namely, to act even more in awe than one felt, and to act even more in pain than one actually was. So he burst in a really wonderful uproar, you would have admired his howls! He dug his fists into his eyes, for, of course, a few tears of terror would be an excellent finishing touch—crocodile tears, if ever there were any in the world that day. They dripped beautifully downwards, splashing on his shirt.

"Ha!" sniffed the crosspatch person, satisfied with

the result of his ten-finger exercises. "And now let's see this gift."

Ibrahim unknotted it from his shirt. "It's not so much, of course. But my father thought——"

"Ha!" snorted the man. "Your father *thought*, did he? Well, well! He thought, did he? Well, let him think again, for what do I want with a pesky blue egg?" And he dashed it down on the stone slabs of the courtyard where it lay, a little pool of yellow liquid, the blue shell broken. "You tell your father that all I want is my camel back again. Thief! Robber! Procrastinator! Falsifier! With his promises, his empty promises!"

This was all rather awful and the crocodile tears were not quite so genuinely crocodile as they had been, for, once started, it was easy to let them trickle forlornly down his cheeks.

"That's right, cry! But neither tears nor a blue egg will pay for the camel. If ever I needed it back, it's now, for as fate would have it, the camel which was to head the wedding procession has died. Last night. And I want to make an impression on Achmed, I need a big camel——"

Ibrahim began to tremble. For all this time outside the door was the very camel needed. And alas, the servant was saying: "Master, this boy has a camel out in the street."

Abou Ben Idim threw open the gate and saw his former possession kneeling before him. "Ha!" he snorted, and clapped his hands seven times so that seven servants came rushing toward him. Seven orders

were thundered forth so fast that all seven servants were kept busy until, before Ibrahim knew what was happening, his camel was decorated with the gayest hangings, fringed hangings, embroidered hangings. Up went the camel's neck proudly. "Behold me now, you Ibrahim!" he seemed to say, and tinkled the bell tied just under his lips. A musician with big drums climbed on the camel's back, other camels were led into the courtyard, everything became confusion and excitement.

Ibrahim made new crocodile tears splash rapidly down his cheeks. "May Allah grant my prayer, could I not be permitted to lead my father's camel in the procession?"

But the tall proud servant in front held the rope firmly, "Not this camel!" he protested.

"Nor this one either," said the second servant.

But nobody stood at the head of the third camel, and Ibrahim grabbed the rope. Life was fun, after all! He wiped off his mock tears.

Everyone waited — camels, musicians, servants. Where was the bride? Presently she came, and although she was veiled so that no one could possibly see her face, it was easy to notice that she was crying from the way her shoulders shook with sobs. Not crocodile tears, either, poor girl, leaving home for an unknown house, an unknown family of perfect strangers. She fumbled with her veil and Ibrahim saw her drop something by mistake. She stooped quickly to catch it, and he saw her groping for it blindly. Then he saw something else—she was picking

up a piece of his eggshell. Oh, Allah was great! Allah was good! For the little bride had her present after all.

But neither he nor she realized quite what a link a mere eggshell would be toward a happier tomorrow; but that was because Easter was just around the corner.

You may have thought in years past that Easter coats and Easter hats and Easter shoes and Easter gloves and Easter lilies and Easter anthems made Easter; whereas, Easter is not anything you see. It is something you *know*. It is something you *feel* deep inside you. And neither coats nor hats nor shoes nor gloves nor lilies nor anthems have a single thing to do with your knowing and your feeling. As Achmed can tell you. For Easter had come to Achmed.

But just as an egg, a camel, and a crocodile or two were needed to start this story, so a laboratory, a bowl of water, a lump of alum and a string are needed to turn it into an Easter story. The string had a surprise attached to it.

Achmed was a haughty young man. He was rich and important and everybody said flattering things to him. Everybody but the Man From America. The Man From America had just been seen standing on a street corner talking. People had flocked from all over the market place to hear him, and Achmed had thought this a disgrace—to talk in public, to anybody: to beggars! to lepers! to women from the well, balancing pots of water on their heads! ugh! And he had driven past, splashing the Man From America with mud on purpose.

For he was important, himself, he was on his way to college, the new college recently opened outside of town. He had decided to study some more, to become wise. To meet great thinkers. And would you believe it, the greatest thinker in the college turned out to be the street corner speaker. Achmed actually had to sit at the college and wait for this amazing thinker to come home. He was astonished beyond words. And very haughty over it.

"I must wait. I! I! I!"

Presently he was saying, "I wish to make studies in certain things, I! I! I!"

And the Man From America was just as delighted to talk to him as he had been to talk to beggars and lepers and women at the street corner. Just as glad—no more; no less. Achmed had expected more flattery. "I am rich, I have an automobile," he said, to be quite sure the Man From America understood his importance.

"Well, there was a rich young fellow who came to Jesus Christ once, to ask what more he needed. And Jesus said, 'What you need is to sell all you have and give it to the poor, then come and follow me.' We Christians have to remind ourselves of this story quite often. Beggars and lepers and poor women on street corners matter so deeply to the Master."

Which was one way Easter started into this story. For Achmed had questions to ask: What happened to that rich young fellow, for instance? The Man From America opened his Bible and read aloud, "*He turned sadly away.*"

"I see," nodded Achmed.

Week followed week, and he kept attending classes, learning this and learning that, hearing this and hearing that. Much of it about Jesus Christ.

Then one day in the laboratory there was a bowl of water. The Man From America dropped a lump of alum into it. The alum dissolved, and the crystals floated around unseen; indeed, Achmed declared they had entirely disappeared. But the Man From America let a string down into the water, and instantly all those little scattered particles began to form around it, making a thing of beauty.

"Tck!" clicked Achmed's tongue, delighted.

The Man From America said: "That's what lives do when a string is let down into them around which our unseen gifts may form a cluster. A thing of beauty results. It is thrilling. Now you, for instance, have so many gifts. You are rich, you are important, you can read, you can write, you can think, you have free days and health and a dislike of idleness, there are so many possibilities in you I'd like to let down a special string into you and see all these possibilities center around it."

Achmed smiled. "I know you so well now, I know you will be opening that little black Book of yours to read me about your string. So what is it going to say this time?"

"Jesus said: 'And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me.'"

"But did he?" Achmed inquired, curiously.

The Man From America took the big globe and

touched various continents and countries here and there: "Yes, He is drawing America to Him, and Canada, and South America. He is drawing England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales. He is drawing Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Russia. And in this big city here and that tiny town there He is drawing to Himself Turks and Armenians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Filipinos, Negroes. For all men everywhere feel this urge to let their hopes and longings and abilities cluster around some great central force. He is that Force. Men are restless if they have no Center in their lives. They are restless until they rest in Him."

"I am restless, myself," Achmed admitted. "Nothing really satisfies me. So now my father, alas! has arranged a marriage for me. But I do not care about it at all. For I understand the girl is ignorant. She has never been to school, as her father does not believe in the new ideas. So I am bored over everything in my life."

"You need never be bored if you let your hopes and longings and abilities cluster around the great central Force, my boy. Meanwhile, take this bunch of crystals home to remind you of our conversation."

Achmed took home the crystals. It was like bringing home Easter, except that Easter is something you cannot see—you only know it, and feel it, deep inside.

And at this very same time there were camels approaching his door, bringing a bride. He was bored over this. He thought it was very old fashioned to come with camels. Automobiles should be the only

style used by *his* wife! But more important than automobiles was a piece of blue eggshell clasped in his wife's hand. It was like bringing home Easter, except that Easter is something you cannot see—you only know it, and feel it deep inside.

"What is it?" he asked, when all the hub-bub had passed.

"Nothing at all, only a bit of foolishness," she said, trying to hide it. "I just picked it up for good luck, because I dropped something and stumbled in the courtyard of my old home. I was superstitious over it. I hoped this funny piece of blue might be a charm to save me from trouble."

He insisted on seeing it. The words on the shell said, "*—ppy Easter from Peter Prior, Jr.*" Now, Peter Prior was the name of the Man From America.

There was more in this than met the eye, as you can see! So the eggshell was carried to Prof. Prior who began investigations. Whereupon it soon came to light that young Master Peter Prior had been busy coloring eggs the week before Easter. But there is no fun in coloring eggs if you don't give them to somebody. Therefore he hid one in the straw where Ibrahim's hens seemed to spend their time—for Ibrahim lived near the little college and had often given Peter rides on his camel. And that was that.

But the Man From America gathered his little boy into his arms on Easter morning. "Sonny," he said, "here's a piece of rock candy for you, for Easter. It's to remind you that every blessed thing you do in this land can be God's string—all sorts of curious events

can come clustering around it. Camels and crocodiles, weddings, timid brides, bored grooms. It's a mighty good thing to have all these mixtures, Sonny, it's what I'm here for, to help them mix! And I do thank you for helping me."

So you can see that for a wedding cake there really could have been no better recipe than three crocodiles, one camel and one scrambled egg, moistened by crocodile tears. For it started one bride and one groom in a new line of work, they even grew interested in Ibrahim and little Peter Prior, since friendships are sure to result when Easter comes around the corner into one's home. Ibrahim says now, "Suppose I hadn't cried those crocodile tears!" But Abou Ben Idim insists he would have done exactly what he did do in any case. While the Man From America goes around contentedly humming the words of a hymn learned in an old New England meeting-house, long ago:

*"In each event of life how clear
Thy guiding hand I see,
The blessings of each day how dear
Because conferred by Thee."*

XXIII

THE LITTLE FLOWERS CAME THROUGH THE GROUND

SOME people think Nick did it on purpose, and some people think he did it by mistake. "Those buff-colored envelopes really are exactly the same size and shape, you know!" But Nick himself, who certainly knew whether it was or wasn't done on purpose, could only be persuaded to say, with a very odd smile: "We—I—I now, how could anything be a mistake when it turned out so well?" So there you are! You can believe what you want to believe.

But the fact of the matter is that when the Easter offering envelopes were collected on Easter Sunday morning, Nick put in an envelope which he had been holding in his hands patiently, the way one does hold envelopes while waiting for the usher to come down the aisle, pew by pew, and just as Nick dropped his envelope into the plate it gave a curious flop sidewise, so that Nick saw and the usher saw and everybody in the pew saw that the envelope was decorated with a very gay bunch of flowers, looking exactly as seed envelopes look! Nobody knew what to do about it, Nick least of all. Some people wanted to titter and some were scandalized. What a perfectly dreadful boy Nick was! And what on earth would their Dis-

tinguished Visitor think about it if it ever came to his ears that in the Easter Offering for world missions a boy had contributed *seeds*?

Well, it did come to his ears. It could hardly escape coming, for the minister's pew was just behind Nick's and every one who sat there saw that gorgeous splash of color as plain as day. So that at the dinner table, later on, there was quite a hubbub about it. Babs told what she thought of Nick Tracy, to dare do a cheap thing like that! Whereupon George flared up: "Oh, that's right, blame poor old Nick! Why, you silly girl, he hadn't a notion he was doing it. Didn't you see his *face*? But nobody stands up and reaches out to grab back envelopes when once they're in the collection plate. It simply isn't done in our select church. Fancy good old Deacon Drake fainting in coils in the church aisle!"

Then the minister's wife said her say about it, and the minister said his, and, all told, the topic lasted from soup to dessert, so that the Distinguished Visitor heard every possible angle of the tale until a special twinkle grew deeper and deeper in his eyes. For all the time he had his own angle, you see.

He knew there was to be an Easter Vesper Service for young people. And he had been wondering and wondering just what to tell them. Well, here was his text delivered right into his hand; here was his whole sermon as plain as day. It was almost too good to be true.

The church was packed to the doors that afternoon with boys and girls. It was almost like a high

school party, except that there were even younger groups there, too. The late afternoon sun came streaming through the stained glass windows in the gayest fashion, so that, with hymns and flowers and sunshine, the service was really perfect. Especially the Primary Department, in the most fetching of little frilled frocks, or the most abbreviated of little trousers, standing up to sing in that chirping, uncertain fashion of Primaries:

*"The little flowers came through the ground
At Easter time, at Easter time.
They raised their heads and looked around
At happy Easter time.
And every little flower did say:
'Good people, bless the Lord this day,
For Christ is risen, the angels say,
At happy Easter time.'"*

Then, just as the sun became hidden behind the great church oak trees, the room grew dim and mysteriously beautiful when the Distinguished Visitor arose to speak. He held something in his hands.

"My notes!" he explained, and grinned like a shy boy. Everybody grinned with him, feeling suddenly as if they had known him always.

"Making speeches is a job," he began. "You don't always know quite what to say. So it was a fine thing for me that this morning somebody dropped the notes for my entire speech into the collection plate—see, here it is! And if I had had a particle of doubt about it, then these Primaries would have convinced me by singing 'The Little Flowers Came Through the

Ground,' for that's my text, and that's my sermon. Just that! *The little flowers came through ground!* Maybe you think there isn't much of a sermon about that, but it's a perfectly grand sermon,—the only kind Jesus came on earth to preach. Let's suppose I'm a florist, and people keep coming into my store and saying: 'What have you got in white flowers to-day? No! No! No! I don't want those awful colored flowers. I can't bear them yellow or red or those queer dark shades. What? *You* think they're rich and velvety, do you? Well! Well! There's no accounting for tastes. As for me, I'm so delicately sensitive to shadings that only white flowers seem like real flowers!' Now suppose every single day, and all day, that was said to me by every customer, would you blame me for becoming rather a cross florist? For wouldn't I know that flowers are flowers, no matter what their color? Wouldn't I know that they all grew from seeds? That they must all be planted in the same earth? That they all need the same sun, the same rain? That they all send roots down into the soil and sprouts up into the air? That they all have stems and leaves and blossoms and fragrance? That God made them all? Show me your hands: who believes this?"

Of course every hand was raised. Nobody knew what he was driving at, but everybody grinned pleasantly at everybody else. Of course they believed it, especially the Primaries—*the little flowers came through the ground at Easter time*. It was more than a song. It was a fact. Who dared say it wasn't?

The Distinguished Visitor consulted his "notes." Then he turned them around for every one to see, and behold—Nick Tracy's envelope! There was a hushed gasp as every one began recognizing it, for the scandal of it had been spreading through the congregation since noon. Truly it was amazing to have a sermon based on Nick's mistake.

"You will see that on this envelope there is a bouquet of gorgeous flowers. There's a brilliant tulip and a velvety black pansy side by side with a white pansy, then there's this lovely yellow daffodil. They all make me think of photographs of friends of mine, they do indeed. You know, I spend my time traveling around the world, here and there; it's natural for me to have friends everywhere. This tulip, for instance. It reminds me of the turban of a friend of mine in India. That turban of his is a bulby, pinkish—red affair, just like this bulby, pinkish—red bud. And this brown sheath around the stem reminds me of the brown skin of my friend who wears the turban. He's a wonderfully brave fellow. He has been desperately rich and desperately unhappy; and now he's desperately poor and desperately happy. Curious, isn't it? And a seed made all the difference. Just the tiniest seed in the world lodged in his mind and began to grow there. The seed was a sentence of three small words: '*God is love.*' 'I must find this God,' my friend said, for he had had no idea there was a god of love anywhere. So he asked and he asked and he asked, until finally he heard more of Him. But would you believe it, the people who told him about the God of love were not

of his caste, and his family threatened to disown him entirely if he dared to continue to go with these rank outsiders. And so he had to decide: should he follow this wonderful new God and be poor but happy or should he stay with his family and be rich but unhappy. He debated a month. Then he said: 'But of course I must go!' Before he left, his sister made him some candy. He left it on a table. And half an hour later his pet dog lay dead on the floor—sampling that innocent-looking candy had poisoned the dog! That was how much his family hated to have him break caste—they preferred to have him dead. But his seed had taken root; the little flowers came through the ground in India—at Easter time. But sometimes it is bitter cold at Easter. Flowers can freeze—they can nearly die, just as family hatred and family sneers and family jeers can freeze persons and nearly kill them."

Surely it was being the strangest sermon in the world, this! For the Distinguished Visitor had a story about every flower on Nick's envelope. There was the Black Pansy to remind him of a black friend, just the finest friend and the bravest friend and the straightest friend—a newsboy, only twelve years old, selling papers on a down-town street corner. And one day, instead of the three copper pennies he expected to receive he discovered an unusually bright penny which was not a penny at all, but a gold piece. Now a gold coin means money! Lots of money. It takes days and days and days to earn that much. But a seed had once been planted in the heart of that black

boy. The seed was called *honor*; he had heard that nineteen hundred years ago there was another Boy of Twelve who had decided He was old enough to be about His Father's Business,—the business of treating the world as you want it to treat you.

"Well," said the black boy sadly, "I reckon that means 'good-by, you li'l gold piece!' For I reckon I wouldn't nebber want to go gibbing away no two dollar and a half gold pieces thinking they was jess copper centeses, 'deed I wouldn't!" So he took to his heels and he ran and he ran and he ran until he found the man who had made the mistake.

The Distinguished Visitor smiled: "I happen to know this is a true story, because, you see, I'm the man who got his gold piece back! That's why I like the stuff I find in black boys. Plant a seed in them, and what a flower you get! What a flower!"

He had other stories. The yellow daffodil made him think of a pair of yellow Chinese trousers! He said he wished those trousers could come walking down the aisle this very moment to tell their own story,—a thrilling story, all about a famine in China. There is often a famine in China. That is because China is so very, very full of people that when the crops fail and floods come and sickness—you can guess a little about it, although you can never guess what the boy with the yellow trousers did. All on account of a seed that had been planted in his heart, he, too, like that Other Boy Of Twelve, wanted to be about His Father's Business, but he had never found out when or how or where he could do something definite for

this unseen Father, until famine came. And then suddenly, very uncomfortably, he knew the when and how and the where was—*then and there*, for he was about to eat his last bit of food. And he was terribly hungry, hungrier than anybody ever gets in America. Because here, you may have no food yourself, but you know that all the time there is a house with a pantry next door, or a store with groceries, or a quick lunch counter. But over there in China his last little bit of food was—*all*. Not a crumb left in town. Not a crumb in the next town. Yet he took those few crumbs to his sick Chinese pastor.

“You’ve been everything on earth to me, and you’re important in town. I’m not. You matter to everybody. I don’t. You bring Jesus to people. I can’t. So here’s some food. Maybe if you eat it you will grow strong enough to help a few more people today. I don’t need it myself. Really I don’t. So good-bye, good-bye!” And the pastor says it was the biggest lesson the church in that town had ever had. For here was an unimportant little boy living out what Jesus had suggested: “Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, ye did it unto *Me*.”

The little flowers came through the ground, in China, that year!

And then the Distinguished Visitor said: “There’s the White Pansy left, side by side with the Black Pansy, next to the Daffodil. But it puts its pansy nose in the air: ‘I am a white pansy, I am!’ it boasts. ‘I am different from these others. Finer! More unusual. You see, I’m *White*!’ But I say to it: ‘You foolish

Pansy, you! Flowers are all just flowers. What have you done that makes you finer, more unusual? It's the fragrance and the beauty that makes flowers lovely. Have you been brave, like my Tulip friend, or honest, like my Black Pansy friend, or generous, like my Daffodil friend? For mere whiteness is nothing by itself. Why did you think whiteness was such a special virtue?" "

Well, the White Pansy did not know.

And the Distinguished Visitor did not know.

And Nick Tracy did not know.

In fact, nobody in that church knew.

A flower was going to be a flower to them all from that time on. A boy was going to be a boy to them from that time on, whether his skin was brown or black or white or yellow. While as for the girls, they saw the point, too. Babs said to herself: "Oh, I'd just give anything to have a jolly seed envelope like Nick's this very minute. I'd like to give an Easter Offering all over again in it. I think the name of my offering would be—race prejudice."

The Distinguished Visitor was saying: "Just in case you ever need a Bible text to remember this sermon by, there are plenty of good ones. There's: '*God is no respecter of persons*,' which is just another way of saying that your skin and your age and your nationality and your street address aren't things God notices at all. His little flowers come through the ground, here, there and everywhere—all colors, all kinds. He likes them all, alike. Or perhaps you can best remember the sermon with this text: 'Man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.' "

XXIV

OLD MRS. NEWSPAPER MAKES A CLEAN SWEEP

OLD Mrs. Newspaper had no more idea that she was really a newspaper than you have that you are a perpendicular biped, for the simple reason that she had never heard of such a thing! She would have said that she was just a poor old sweeper-woman going around from house to house, sweeping rooms clean, and that is actually all she ever did; that, and *talk*. For when a sweeper-woman is the Walking Talking Society Column of a little Hindu town, do consider the news she will have to tell to the shut-in ladies. Those dear little shut-in persons who can rarely ever stick their dear noses out of doors, and who wonder and wonder what goes on.

For instance, there was little Mrs. Silk Merchant on a sofa cushion in her zenana, looking very glum and bored and tired, as anybody would look who had been cooped indoors for four long years with nothing much to look at but a blank wall and a high window and a very glum, bored, tired mother-in-law. In would come Mrs. Newspaper with her broom of twigs and splints, and immediately a bit of the glumness would lift from little Mrs. Silk Merchant's face.

"Well, here you are!" she would cry, clapping her hands until the bracelets tinkled.

"Salaam, my little lady," old Mrs. Newspaper would reply. "Yes, here I am. But I'd have you know I'm not at all the same old woman who came here yesterday morning, for great doings went on in town last night, and there was I right in the front row!"

"Oh, good-goody!" cried little Mrs. Silk Merchant, cheerfully; for after all, she was only fourteen years old, and she had been cooped in Mr. Silk Merchant's gloomy house for four long years, so this was quite the jolliest hour of the day when Mrs. Newspaper came to clean.

"Yes," continued the sweeper-woman, forgetting to sweep, "there was I in the front row, and I didn't miss a thing. It was certainly something to see! That white sahib—can you picture a man with a white face and white hands?"

"No I can't!" breathed the horrified little Mrs. Silk Merchant. "How did the poor fellow ever fade to such a color? And why did he come to town?"

"He says he came to bring us God."

"Oh, dear! *another* one? We have so many gods already. Is this new one wood or stone? Is it the kind you have on a shelf in your home, or the kind they put in the temples where men come to bring their offerings?"

Old Mrs. Newspaper swallowed three times in an embarrassed sort of way: "Well now, I find it hard to tell properly, I'm so old and stupid, but yet I really think I heard that man correctly, and he certainly *said* that this God is already in everybody's heart."

"Oh, stuff and nonsense!" clucked the mother-in-

law, glumly. "You don't know what you are talking about. Sweep, woman, sweep! That's *your* business in life. What does an ignorant old sweeper know about idols, anyhow? And who ever heard of an idol inside a person's heart? You're daft! You're crazy! You're stupid!"

"Maybe I am! Maybe I am!" acknowledged old Mrs. Newspaper, sweeping away for dear life. "I'm just telling you the things I heard last night, that's all."

And although little Mrs. Silk Merchant thought it the queerest story she had ever heard in all her fourteen years of life, there sat her mother-in-law in such stiff silence that the sweeper-woman dared not look up or speak again, but swept in a perfect cloud of dust until the room was done.

But all day long as the child sat on her cushion looking at the uninteresting blank wall, she never really saw the wall at all, for she was far too busy wondering how in the world a man would look who was white all over! "I fancy the whiteness must stop at his neck and wrists, don't you suppose so? I don't imagine any mortal could live or breathe or move if his arms and his neck and his whole body were white! Wouldn't he be a comical sight—white arms and white feet! I should think being white might really *hurt* . . . and of course there couldn't be white babies, could there?"

"How you babble on and on!" snorted her mother-in-law. "You make me wonder anew how my poor son ever had the misfortune to draw such a foolish,

addle-pated little simpleton of a wife as you! Hold your peace, child; you should be ashamed to listen to that old ignorant sweeper-woman. Sweepers are too low caste to be noticed by a merchant's wife."

"Y-e-s! But how else would we ever hear what's happening in town if *she* didn't tell us?" And the mother-in-law was silent, for how else could such news ever reach zenana ladies except through the broom of some Mrs. Newspaper?

Therefore, the next morning, they both began listening eagerly for the patter of Mrs. Newspaper's bare brown feet and for the whisk of her scratching broom: "Well," they inquired, "did you find out anything new about the God that the white sahib is bringing to town?"

"Indeed I did," said old Mrs. Newspaper delightedly, "and it's all exactly as I said yesterday. For I went again last night, and I just kept right on asking questions until I got things straightened out in my head. He's a very nice sahib, even if he is so white, and he really made things very clear. His God is Everybody's God, and Everybody's God is everywhere all the time. He's in my hut. He's in your zenana. He's here *now*."

"Where?" breathed the two astonished merchant ladies, peering around the dark room in complete surprise.

"In your hearts," answered Mrs. Newspaper softly. She clasped her tired brown hands reverently: "All you got to do is to say: 'Come into my heart, Every-

body's God,' and He will come in; so then you can always be very happy."

"Dear me!" cried little Mrs. Silk Merchant, excitedly. "It sounds lovely!"

"Stuff and nonsense," quoth old Mrs. Silk Merchant, sourly. "There never was a God who would do anything like that. Especially for a woman! You stick to your sweeping, for of course you've got the whole story crooked. You sweep, and keep quiet!"

So the old sweeper swept and swept, but the next morning when she came back her face was shining: "I can sing a song about Everybody's God," she said, proudly. "I learned it last night. The sahib taught all of us; it goes this way:

*'I love to tell the story
Of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory,
Of Jesus and His love.*

*I love to tell the story
Because I know it's true;
It satisfies my longings
As nothing else would do.'*"

"That's a nice tune," smiled little Mrs. Merchant, humming it. "Just tell me the words once more."

So all through that long stupid day as she sat on her cushion, facing the same old blank wall, she hummed that little Christian tune, and the blank wall was not a blank wall, for it seemed to be peopled with white sahibs and singing Hindus.

Then on the following day, old Mrs. Newspaper came pattering in with a story she remembered about Everybody's God: "I may be a stupid old creature, but this I just couldn't get crooked—for once, when Everybody's God was here among men, He was so tired one day that He sat down by a well, and He was so thirsty that a woman drew some water from the well and gave Him a drink. Then He sat talking with her all afternoon about peace in her heart."

"A *woman*?" asked little Mrs. Silk Merchant. "Do you mean to tell me that Everybody's God talked with a *woman*?"

"I don't believe it!" said her mother-in-law crossly. "You're only good for sweeping, you poor old thing! You can't get anything straight, that's sure, for no God would ever waste time on a woman, I know very well."

Old Mrs. Newspaper clasped her broom in her arms: "Oh, but I have gotten this straight, indeed I have! Over and over the white sahib told us how Everybody's God feels toward women exactly as He feels towards men. There is no shadow of difference in His love."

"Dear me," smiled the young girl, wistfully, "You certainly do hear the nicest things every night, don't you?"

"Entirely too nice to be true," snorted the mother-in-law.

"Maybe it does sound that way," agreed old Mrs. Newspaper pleasantly, "but all the families where I go to sweep have doubted me just as you doubt me,

until some of their men folks have gone to hear for themselves."

"Well, and did they hear all these impossible things you've been telling us?"

"Yes, they did!" nodded old Mrs. Newspaper, enthusiastically. "Oh, there's no doubt that nothing like this has ever come to town before."

"Well, so it seems! So it seems!" agreed the two shut-in ladies, much mystified. "You just keep your ears wide open, won't you?" they implored. And all afternoon they sat on their cushions humming Mrs. Newspaper's tune and retelling Mrs. Newspaper's stories, until the first thing anyone knew they began to believe this part or that part, and long for the sweeper-woman's next visit.

This went on for weeks and weeks, until one day she came with some very upsetting news: "This will be the last day that I can come to sweep, here or anywhere!"

"*What?*" gasped both the merchant ladies, broken-hearted to lose their only newspaper. "But how can you possibly stop sweeping? Weren't you born into a sweeper family? Mustn't you be a sweeper until you die? Oh, how dare you stop? How dare you? What will the gods think to see an old sweeper-woman going against their will?"

"I don't feel about caste the way I used to," old Mrs. Newspaper said serenely. "I don't believe now that some of us were low-born from the hands and feet of Brahma, while others were high-born from his head and so forth. The white sahib told us how God made

all men in his image, all exactly equal. It sounds so unbelievable, but seeing what a difference I can find in myself since loving the Saviour I think it must be true. It's this way: you see, I've been going from house to house sweeping, and I really hardly noticed how all you people were getting interested in the news I brought, until, one by one, somebody from these various families would go to the white sahib to inquire if this or that story about Everybody's God could possibly be true. Some old sweeper-woman told their wives—of course she probably had gotten it all crooked. But no, every word was true! True! True! And finally so many people came to the white sahib that he called me to his bungalow the other day. He said I had a gift for telling news. He said Everybody's God needed that gift. He said if I would study to become a Bible woman I could go from house to house just the same as ever, but not to sweep,—to sit in the zenanas and tell Bible stories as long as people would listen. Would I like to give this gift to Everybody's God? My tongue for Him to use—my lips? My voice? My thoughts? Of course I said 'Yes'! I'm the happiest old woman in this town now, to think I have a gift the Saviour wants. I thought I was too poor for Him to notice. But I'm rich! I have a present He wants!"

"But that's a splendid idea," said the older silk merchant lady. "I invite you now to come to sit in my zenana all day long, every day in the week. Come tomorrow."

"Oh, but I don't know enough yet," Mrs. News-

paper objected. "I must go somewhere to school to learn to read, to learn to be this thing called a Bible woman. And then I can come back to sit in your zenana, but only for a little while, because there are so many other people in town who are hungry for Everybody's God. I couldn't stay all day with just one family."

"Perhaps not," the mother-in-law admitted sadly. "But I'm so sorry. I guess I'm as hungry for happiness as anyone in this town."

"I'm hungry, too," sighed little Mrs. Silk Merchant.

And I thought you would love to know how today, in India, God is using this Mrs. Newspaper to spread the old, old story and bring to pass the Bible verse:—"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, *for they shall be filled.*"

XXV

OH FUDGE!

You see, he said it once too often. And he said it to Fanny Farmer of all people. For any other girl might have let the remark pass with an indifferent smile, but not Fanny Farmer. Fanny was that very warm-hearted special kind of girl who took things on her shoulders, as if she alone were their friend; the very special kind of girl who would sit down on a footstool before the fire and gaze into it a long, long time, puzzling things out. The "why" of things! The "when" of things! The "how" of things! Just the kind of girl needed badly in every single town in the whole United States, so that when anybody-called-Jim says "Oh fudge!" there will be a Fanny to hear it and sigh and sit fire-gazing for a long silent hour—until every little crackling flame begins shouting "Oh fudge!" at her, as she worries—worries—worries—her forehead a regular network of wrinkles.

After such a silent hour of deep, deep brooding, any Jim anywhere may well begin to regret such a rash statement as: "No dark-skinned people for me, thank you! Brown or black, both alike to me; I don't like their race and I don't like their color. All lazy good-for-nothings! Can't depend on 'em even while you turn your back. None of those chocolate-colored folks

are ever anything but a perfect waste of missionary money! Might as well chuck your dollars into the river!"

"*Chocolate-colored!*" gasped Fanny Farmer. "But you aren't so narrow that you think the color of a person's *skin* makes any difference, are you? Why, skin is such an unimportant thing—just a few yards of cuticle stretched over a few bones, the same kind of bones you have yourself, James Timothy Fairweather; the same kind of heart and lungs and tummy, too. Couldn't I be just as fine a girl in a chocolate-colored dress as in a snow-white dress? Skin's only a dress, after all."

"Oh fudge!" quoth Mr. James Timothy Fairweather, loftily. Once too often.

For this particular Fanny of ours went straight home to her fireside, full of rebuttals and arguments and proofs. The little flames snapped and scampered with the surprisingness of such a Jim—. "Narrow-minded child!" said she to the andirons. "Ignorant infant!" said she to the poker. "Blind as a bat!" said she to the shovel. Things were looking bad for Jim, when the telephone rang.

It was her chum. "Did you hear the news? Jim Fairweather has just broken his leg, practicing on the baseball field. The ground was all soggy, and he fell . . ."

Back before the fireplace Fanny had a sudden thought. Legs take such a provokingly long time to knit, and while they knit what a lot of time for reading and thinking! Especially for reading. Fanny began

to chuckle. It was, of course, too bad about poor Jim. But the time that would hang heavy on his hands! Oh, that time! She would get even for that abominable "Oh fudge!" She would make him eat his words.

Eat his words? A new and startling idea came popping into her head. That other famous Fanny Farmer, who made fudges and chocolates—why not live up to her name? Especially as the way to a man's heart is through his stomach; and Jim's heart was a queer little shriveled affair, only too evidently. Not room enough for chocolate-colored people. But—chocolate-colored candies? Well, she would see. So she retired to the kitchen.

And I positively dare not describe the tantalizing odors that begin filtering out of that room as she boiled and stirred, and boiled and stirred. Delectable! Ravishing! Cut, eventually, into enormous chunks, fit for a giant. Then wrapped separately in waxed paper.

The non-famous Fanny Farmer then began dashing here and there through the house, collecting reading matter. She sat by her fireplace composing letters. Life was terribly thrilling that day, for her. And for Jim, a little later, when his mother came upstairs with a curiously-shaped package, wrapped in brown, labelled:

"Oh Fudge! Being assorted chocolates, cooked by a certain Fanny Farmer to open the eyes of a blind cousin. Digest contents thoroughly. More will arrive later."

"Well, what do you know about this?" chuckled Jim, unwrapping the parcel and gobbling the fudge in three

greedy gulps. Then he saw that a leaflet had been enclosed, called "Nandamah," on the outside of which Fanny had written: "Jim, I have seen Nandamah with my own eyes. She was here in America at the time of the Jubilee a few years ago; she's a darling, with a shy adorable smile and many quaint remarks in lovely English. She came to take post-graduate medical study in New York. You will see what a far stride this is from the days when her grandparents were *outcastes* in India, which means they belonged to those fifty million Hindus who are like shadows in a weary land—so despised that they have to live outside the village walls; so unholy that their shadows must not fall on any caste man; so poor that they must feed on wretched food picked up inside the village—refuse and carrion, most of it; so ignorant that they cannot read or write, but live and die in squalor, filth and frightful wickedness. You wouldn't expect much to come of such a chocolate-colored girl, would you? Yet Nandamah's grandparents were converted by Dr. Clough at the time of a terrible famine years ago, and, of course, that gave an opportunity for her parents to be educated in our mission, so that today here is our exquisite Nandamah risen to be a doctor, if you please. Yet you say, oh fudge!"

Jim chuckled. "Well, what do you know about this?" And of course he read the leaflet. Just a two-cent leaflet, but full to the brim of pluck. Sheer pluck. For here was a small, brave, shy, brown maiden who had never once been away from home in all her life, who bravely traveled several thousand miles away from Nellore in South India up north to Ludhiana Medical

School. Not only was it an endless difference in miles but also in language—for not one word of this northern language could she speak; she had to learn a totally new tongue in order to take her medical course. But she did it! And here she was today, a girl whom Fanny Farmer had seen and spoken to, a doctor. James Timothy Fairweather said an odd thing: “Well, you’ve got to hand it to her for grit! Honest Injun, I wouldn’t have the nerve to go through college in a foreign language. . . .”

The fudge, you see, was going to his heart! And he began wondering hopefully when “more to arrive later” might be expected. Promptly at two o’clock the doorbell rang, and his mother arrived with instalment number two, labelled: “Oh fudge! Even if you have no use for chocolate-colored people, won’t you read this true account of Pandita Ramabai, poor Jim? She’s somebody everybody who is anybody ought to know about.”

“This means Yours Truly,” said Jim happily, sucking lusciously on an enormous slice of fudge, as he read the human miracle of another brown woman, whose high caste father had done the rather unusual thing for India, namely, teaching his little daughter to read. She was married as a tiny girl, according to Hindu custom, but her husband died, leaving her that most utterly despised and outcaste of all people in India—a widow. But, in spite of her shaven head and her one scant meal a day, Ramabai persistently read the Hindu sacred writings until her brilliancy earned her the high title of “Pundita”—“Learned Scholar”—the only woman

in all India to hold it! And then she found the Saviour, and with beautiful trust in Him, she did a remarkable thing, for during a terrible famine she remembered other little child widows with no talents such as hers to relieve the tragedy of life, so she began gathering them around her on a farm at Poona; first a few, then three hundred, then more than a thousand. Poor, herself, she trusted God for the support of these children. She would pray. And God would answer. Always! It was such remarkable help that they kept a book. On the left-hand side of the book they recorded the prayer, with the date and hour when it was made; on the opposite page, the answer. Again and again the postmark would show that at the very hour when they were praying God was telling some faraway friend to send them the gift that would exactly meet their need. Her school was simplicity itself, almost unbeautiful in its plain white walls, yet out from her doors went girls, equipped with happiness, and learned in all housewifely knowledge, ready to be lights in the darkness of India. No wonder she named the gates of that school "Salvation."

"What a woman!" said James Fairweather to his mother. "Could you dare to care for 2,000 persons every day without a penny in your pocket?"

Mrs. Fairweather shook her head. "She was the most wonderful woman, Jim. I've seen her! Her face simply shining with her belief in God, and He never failed her."

Jim looked at his mother curiously. "Makes a fellow feel sort of simple not to know a blooming thing

about anybody outside of his own country. Fanny knows what she's about, even if she is my own cousin!"

"Fanny's like your grandmother, in so many ways," Mrs. Fairweather laughed. "She's so quiet you don't suspect what she's up to. But I guess you're beginning to suspect now. She told me a few things just now at the front door. I think you're in for a good time."

"I hope I'm in for some more of her good fudge," he said. "A fellow can forget a smashed leg for a while when there's fudge."

You can see for yourself what was happening. Fanny Farmer slaving away merrily in her house, James Fairweather reading and munching away merrily over at his house. It was all very interesting. And yet, would you believe it? When the third batch arrived at five o'clock, Jim ate the fudge—oh yes, trust Jim!—but actually he looked first to see who the new brown heroine was to be. And the heroine was a hero, Sadhu Sundar Singh. As Fanny wrote: "Oh fudge. If you've no use for people with brown skins, what are you going to do about Sadhu Sundar Singh, anyhow? Your poor cousin is worried!"

But she needn't have worried. For here was one of the most astonishing stories imaginable about a boy of fifteen—Singh, by the way, means *Lion*—born in a home of great wealth and luxury, with a wonderful mother who led him to believe that the life of a saint, or sadhu, was to be his highest ambition.

As a little boy he had come to know something about the Bible because he had been sent to the Christian

school in his village, but he had passionately refused to stay in it, because it was a religion so different from his own. When he was fifteen you are to picture him taking his Bible, soaking it in oil and burning it; and he persuaded everyone he could to throw stones at Christian preachers. But he was very unhappy, and one day the Saviour Himself seemed to speak to him: "Why do you persecute me? You were praying for the right way. Why don't you take it?"

That is how he became a Christian. So simply and easily, so radiantly, inwardly, outwardly with great sacrifices. For his father could not believe his ears! "What? a *Christian*? Only the day before yesterday you burned the Bible!"

But the boy knew what he ought to do. His family used every influence possible. They offered him great wealth. They threatened him. Then they persecuted him; and finally, when all their efforts failed, they disowned him and ordered him to leave home. Some of them even gave him poisoned food for the journey. Only a boy! And the first night away from home he spent alone, shivering under a tree. Yet he says: "Yesterday and before that I used to live in the midst of luxury in my home; but now I am shivering here, hungry, and thirsty, without shelter or warm clothes or food." Yet he says that "I remember that night as my first night in heaven."

Jim did not say "Oh fudge!" He, too, was fifteen. He wondered what he would do in similar circumstances—Sundar Singh, fearless as the lion he was named for, set out to be a Christian sadhu. He wore a saffron yel-

low robe such as the Hindu holy men wear and went about among the villages of India preaching and teaching. He sold his possessions and took only his Bible with him. When people would let him sleep in their homes, he accepted their hospitality. Where they rejected him, he went away hungry, to sleep under the open stars. When the people discovered he was a *Christian* sadhu they were sometimes furious at him and threw stones, but his beautiful spirit about such persecution made a great impression on all who saw it. There is such sweetness and love in his face, such fearlessness and vigor, such enthusiasm and such joy that he is simply irresistible wherever he goes. Tibet, Japan, China, America, England, India. All countries have loved him! All countries have honored him! In turban and saffron robe, his feet clad in Indian sandals, his figure erect, his face filled with divine light. . . .

You can see for yourself that in all Christian history no man has followed so literally in the footsteps of the Master of us all; often no place to lay his head, tired, dusty, barefooted, no baggage—year in and year out, telling God's story. . . .

Jim laid down the half piece of fudge he had forgotten to eat. He took a pencil and printed as best he could, being flat on his back:

Fannie, I take it all back. I didn't know what I was talking about when I said that brown people weren't to be depended on when missionaries' backs are turned. It seems to me these three brown Christians are miles ahead of any white Christian I know. My hat's off to them all, thanks to

you. I'm mighty glad I ever said Oh fudge. Three pieces of yours and I'm a new fellow! Have you any more stories to send to your poor ignorant cousin

JIM.

P. S. And of course the actual fudge is rather acceptable, although it makes me a bit ashamed of myself.

Needless to say, Fanny, aided by chums and teachers, kept him supplied. *Chundra Lela*, who spent thirteen years as a pilgrim, climbing, crawling, toiling here, there and everywhere to find peace—all because she was a widow; and then her supreme joy in finding Christ, going everywhere to tell other weary pilgrims. "And she began her pilgrimage when she was only thirteen years old!" sighed Jim. *Naragan Tilak*, the poet who wrote such exquisite hymns for the new Christians, of whom he was one. And many others. For Fanny Farmer found plenty of stories to send, plenty of friends eager to help make James Fairweather into a broader-minded boy.

"I think," said Fanny primly, "he's becoming quite chocolate-coated!" which is the reason Jim is known today as the Chocolate Soldier, a boy eager to help the King win new victories against sin and ignorance anywhere in the world, but especially in those parts of the earth where the brown people live. "Because, you see, they seem to want God harder and to serve Him better than any other people I ever heard of."

Wanted: a Fanny in your town, too!

XXVI

HONK! HONK!

OF course it was having been in America on furlough for a year which made it all seem doubly worse. In America where you went flitting along in Fords, and blowing along in Buicks, and plunging along in Packards, so that the tree you saw one moment was never, by any chance, the tree you saw the next moment, so fast had you whizzed beyond it. But now——

“Well, this is India sure enough!” Mr. Smith said to himself at the very first jolting and jouncing, as the oxen began plodding down the street, pulling the bullock cart in their slowpoke fashion, meandering as if not a clock had ever been made, nor a wrist-watch.

Mr. Smith began to be provoked at them. He said to his two brown school boys: “Can’t you get these animals to go any faster?”

“Certainly, Sahib,” said Krishnaswami, politely, and switched the broad backs affectionately: “G’ dap, you!” But he was completely astonished. What was the Sahib thinking of—oxen? faster? Of course it was just one of his little jokes, so he smiled. Nineteen beautiful white teeth twinkled delightedly at the Sahib, who began to feel a bit ashamed at his impatience.

“You see,” he explained, “in America everything

goes fast. The trains go whizbang over the landscape, and I got spoiled! For the automobiles dash along faster than any animal you ever saw."

"Faster than a lion?" asked Nursai, who had an imagination, and wanted to picture exactly how fast. But the Sahib, who was accurate, hesitated: "Well, now, did you ever see a lion go sixty miles an hour?"

Nursai shook his head: "No-o, Sahib, for wouldn't I have had to run all that sixty miles after him, watch in hand, and you know my breath wouldn't hold out that long, nor my legs."

The Sahib laughed: "Exactly! But I'd like an automobile, nevertheless."

Krishnaswami sighed: "It is a pity. You could not find one in your America?"

The Sahib also sighed: "They do not grow wild on bushes, my dear boy. And the people in America were so busy singing hymns on Sunday and earning money on Monday that——"

The two boys listened spellbound, for you can understand how to them America was a fabulous place, a regular fairyland, full of amazing buildings and white sahibs and little white-all-over children. "Tell us," they begged. "Tell us about Sunday, and then tell us about Monday in America. As to the church, was it as fine as ours, Sahib? and as to those hymns, were they ones we know?"

The Sahib looked very grave, for in his mind's eye he was seeing their church. "No," he said, gently, "that church in America is not as fine as yours. Not nearly. It is true, it covers four times as much space

as yours, and it is built of great heavy blocks of stone, with a high steeple towering way up in the air where lovely chimes sing out on Sunday mornings."

"But, Sahib, that is a regular palace of a church—so wide, so high; all stone! While ours——"

The Sahib smiled: "Wide? High? They are just words. But I am remembering how your church was built. I am seeing your mothers weaving leaf mats for the side walls, and your fathers cutting down bamboo trees for the props, I am seeing the entire congregation working like bees building it and roofing it and thatching it. I am seeing a thank-offering service when our big hand-woven collection basket had to be emptied of its offerings over and over again to make room for new collections! Shall I ever forget the cocoanuts and mangoes and bananas piled in great heaps? Shall I ever forget the pieces of lace, the yards of silk, the beautiful bolts of cotton cloth brought to the Saviour that day? Shall I ever forget the bracelets and necklaces and earrings, or even the live chickens and the brass ornaments piled in that basket? Why there never was a giving like it in town before, with everybody smiling all over his or her dear brown face, so glad to have something precious to give to Father God for His new house. But, perhaps, you don't remember, you were rather young then."

"Remember? But, of course, Sahib, I was the boy who brought the two eggs," said Krishnaswami.

"And I brought rice. I had been saving it for a whole week out of my own meals," said Nursai.

"So you did," beamed Mr. Smith. "And that's what

makes our church here so fine, so beautiful. It is built with love. Not with mere stones."

There was silence. Both boys knew that their kind Sahib was feeling hurt all up and down inside him. It must have been a strange hurting, his lips were so tight shut. Nursai decided to help matters by hinting: "Now about those hymns, for instance?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Smith. "Those hymns. Well, whenever I was on hand in any church they sang two special hymns. For my sake. Yes, all up and down America those two hymns were sung and sung, for me. There would be congregations thumbing brown hymnbooks until they found the proper places, and other congregations thumbing red hymnbooks to find other proper places, but the hymns themselves were the same. Before I spoke it would be:

*O Zion haste, thy mission high fulfilling
To Tell to all the world that God is love.*

"And after I spoke it would be:

*Speed away, speed away, on your mission' of light
To the lands that are lying in darkness and night.*

"Odd, wasn't it, to choose the two most inappropriate hymns for me, when the minute I began to talk they would find out that the only two impossible deeds for me to accomplish in India were to *haste* and to *speed*! Speed, in a bullock cart? Haste, with oxen? Never! It was amusing."

"Was America amused, Sahib?"

Mr. Smith sighed. "No, America had no sense of

humor over that particular job. America didn't seem to see the point. I talked like chain lightning to get everything told, I made my talks warm and thrilling and stirring, so that ladies would begin to cry and boys would sit breathless on the edge of the pews, and men would nod their heads approvingly. It was great fun, telling America things. 'My, what adventures you've had!' they would say afterwards, and pat me on the back cordially."

Both boys nodded. "Of course! But did you tell them about the time the plague swept our town and you had to pretend to be a doctor and turned the church into a hospital making all of us school boys your nurses? Shall I ever forget!"

"Did you tell them about the time when the robber tribe swooped down on us to steal everything, but you just *adopted* them, beggars and baggage and babies?—such a family! But look at them now!"

"And did you remember to tell how we all tried to stone you to death when you first came to town with your new religion?"

"And how many times people tried to poison your food? And to set fire to your bungalow?"

"Did you remember to tell how the two deadly cobras got into your bungalow, Sahib?"

"And how a monkey dropped down from the rafters right on the pulpit desk while you were preaching?"

"Surely, Sahib, you told how the elephant knocked down the first little church you had?"

"And about all these trips through the jungles to your little far-off mission stations, when you have to

travel for days where lions and tigers and snakes might kill you any moment?"

"Boys, I told them everything. I squeezed fourteen years of thrills into thirty minutes of sermon. I told all the human stirring things I've always wished missionaries would tell, the comical with the beautiful, the thrilling with the sad. I talked as fast as I could to get it all said, and never once did I forget this old bullock cart. Never once! I made her jounce and jolt through every sermon. I made her creak and creep from the text to the amen. Nobody could help knowing how I hated this tragic waste of precious time. I could be four men if I could get to places quicker, and I said so. Whereupon congregations would stand up and sing lustily: 'Speed away, speed away, on your mission of light!'"

"Even the white boys, Sahib? Did they sing it?"

"Even the white boys!"

The two brown boys looked at one another. They whispered. They nodded. "Sahib" they said gently. "The reason has entered our heads. America is too poor. That is it. America would like you to have this thing called an automobile, especially the boys of America would like it, but America is too poor. That is it. It has just entered our heads."

Mr. Smith was touched. Bless these loyal chaps! Grateful to America for all America had done for them: a missionary, a mission, a school. America was wonderful. But suddenly poor. Too poor for automobiles. Mr. Smith knew that he dared not say one more word against America to these young admirers, so he sat

staring at the dazzling thread of yellow roadway stretching far ahead like a gleaming ribbon, wavering in the heat; and he began thinking and thinking and thinking, of this certain lady and that certain lady who had had a new ring on her finger equal in price to two new Tin Lizzies; or a new rug on her floor; or a new coat on her back. . . . But, of course, he must not judge, if rings and rugs and coats seemed so much more important to the King's Business than speed and haste.

Speed . . . and haste . . .

Speed . . . and haste . . .

The words sang through his mind like a weird chant until he was startled to hear Krishnaswami saying: "Sahib, I have been off in the jungle getting you this and that, and now see what I've made you, Sahib! To go sixty miles an hour, Sahib! Haste! Haste! Speed away!"

Mr. Smith could hardly believe his eyes. For there stood such a cart as he had never seen in all his days; or rather it wasn't so much the cart itself, for there were the usual number of home-made wheels, and some not at all unusual leafy mats covering it; but was there anything usual about that animal champing at its bit? Pawing the roadway? Roaring? Swishing its tail? Lashing its tail? Licking its lips? Bristling its giant whiskers? Getting ready to spring? . . . Mercy! The beast was undoubtedly a lion. Incredible! But certainly a lion.

"Haste! Speed!" urged Krishnaswami proudly, and forced poor Mr. Smith into the cart. Whereupon

the lion looked over his shoulder scornfully: "Look here, you man from America! I'm hungry, and I want a little exercise before dinner, so hang on tight. One, two, three, ready—go!"

And go they did. Never was there exercise in all India like it. Such leaps and bounds, such dashes and splashes, such froth and frenzy, with the dust of that yellow roadway rising up like a smoke barrage along every inch they covered. The lion would occasionally shout back: "Here's a bad spot. Hold on tight!" More clouds of dust. On and on and on, with such bellowings and roarings as you can hardly imagine. Mr. Smith was amazed to find himself still in the cart. Equally amazed that the cart was still a cart.

"This just shows how it pays to teach boys carpentry! I've always maintained our industrial mission work was as valuable as anything we do. Now just *look* at this cart—I don't believe in all America there's a boy who could have put the different parts together more quickly or securely—it's been a severe test, this past hour." And he pulled out his watch to see if it had been an hour. It had. Exactly.

"Time up?" the lion asked, stopping. "Well, I always take a sixty-mile stroll before meals, improves both appetite and digestion I find. And now, sir, if I may make bold to inquire, of what are you thinking?"

Mr. Smith replied at once: "I was thinking about someone named Daniel."

"I know. The one in the lion's den?"

"Yes."

"A wonderful man, sir. Brave and true. Resembles you."

"The idea! I only wish——"

"Tut, tut! I ought to know. I've seen you pass by this jungle often enough to know you're brave. Right through the thick of danger, sir. Lions to the left of you. Tigers to the right of you. Vipers festooned overhead. And you with only two useless school boys. Brave I call it, very brave."

"Thank you," said Mr. Smith, "I was hardly expecting this from such as you."

The lion bowed. "*I'm* the one that's indebted! It has been a privilege to get to know you so intimately. Almost everyone in India comes at me with guns, rather nervous. You have been so calm. I admire your nerve! The only bad part of it is I've taken you sixty miles further away than you expected to be at this moment, far beyond the village where you meant to hold your evening service. I dare say you were too absorbed in our speed to notice the village about forty-five miles back. But since you're expected there, it's up to me to get you back safely and on time. You're mighty popular in that place, sir. I heard them last night when I was snooping around their sheepfolds. 'The white sahib is coming to tell us more about Father God!' They are a people hungry for your good news, sir. So they will be waiting for you toward nightfall, their torches blazing in the darkness as they gaze down the roadway."

"That is true. I must not disappoint them. They are very precious to me, these people."

"Quite! So now we'd better be off, a bit slower than before or we may arrive sooner than you wish."

And off he trotted, quite slowly, but not as slowly as oxen, of course. Perhaps fifteen miles an hour. A delightful rate. Mr. Smith began to get excited: "This is great, simply great!" he cried, running his hands through his hair, enthusiastically. "I wish I could engage you permanently. You wouldn't consider it, I suppose? It would be a thriller to write home about!"

"I know," said the lion, sadly, "I know. You need a real sensation to stir America, don't you? I can fairly see the headlines in your missionary magazine:

MISSIONARY DIARY EYE-OPENER

SHOWS RESOURCEFULNESS IN POVERTY

*Lacking Automobile, Missionary Goes To Edge of Jungle Daily,
Whistles: 'Come Little Lion, Come!'*

"Then a picture of me, the King of Beasts, standing tamely posed. The word LION TAXI SERVICE, on side of cart. And beneath America's two favorite hymns, 'O Zion Haste' and 'Speed Away.' Yes, sir! It would be good business, that, very good. In America. But it wouldn't do here. Not in India, sir."

"Why not?" asked Mr. Smith, greatly disappointed; for fifteen miles an hour was creating just enough breeze to keep him cool and he had delightful visions of visiting all his mission outposts with equal speed and comfort.

"Why not, indeed? Why, my good man, what you desire at the end of your journeys to your various outposts is an audience, isn't it? A calm audience.

A contented audience. One that will stay put; one that will listen attentively and cordially. One that will linger to ask questions. Now, suppose I come cantering into town—I ask you? Where is your calm audience? Your contented audience? Gone! Vanished! Up in the tree tops, down in the wells, anywhere, everywhere. Hiding. Trembling. Quivering. Shaking. This may be all very pleasant as an arrangement for you, and all very pleasant for me, and all very pleasant for America. But India doesn't know the good side of me, sir. I-er-er—my reputation isn't very pleasant here. I'm supposed to be all meals inside. Too many sheep missing, sir. I do like a mutton chop for supper now and again! So I'm not good mission drawing material, you see."

"I see."

"It's too bad."

"Yes, it's too bad."

"Suppose we compromise. I will let you take my picture now for advertising purposes in America. And then I think you'd better try another make of taxi. One more suitable for town use. I fancy that other boy of yours has been busy, too; I saw him cart-making and getting together a three-some as we went careening past him."

So, Mr. Smith took the photograph. You never saw a pleasanter one, with the lion obligingly looking at a little bird just as he was told. Indeed, he was almost too placid, as you can see for yourself. But that was because he was so sad.

"I simply hate to let you go," he sighed, slashing

his tail sadly. "You suit me from the ground up. You're just to my taste! And if there's ever any little thing in my line which I can do for you, I'm yours to command. You know where my den is, so just come to the edge of the jungle and whistle—three long, one short, that's the way to spell lion. Speed and haste my motto, not greed and taste as commonly supposed. Sir, good day! We part. I certainly know where to put a square meal, yummy-yum!"

And he paced mournfully away. Mr. Smith would have been even more touched if he had not suddenly noticed a cloud of dust dashing toward him. Yesterday he might have been amazed, but today he was past amazement. For three goats do not equal one lion for pure excitement, although for speed and haste they do fully as well, he discovered, arriving at his destination in another cloud of dust, on time to a dot. Everyone was waiting. Torches blazed. The goats capered proudly and haughtily. "And now we want our picture taken, too, if you please," said the white goat, who was quite a beauty. "I would like America to see how I look! Please take our picture!"

Mr. Smith took it, and was just winding up the film when he felt the hands of Krishnaswami and Nursai shaking him. Gently of course, and respectfully. "Sahib, excuse us! But we are nearing the Village of the Sacred Stone. The people are waiting, their torches blazing. Would it not be better to wake up now?"

"Bless me, *wake up*? Why I was never more awake in my whole life, you young scallawags! The scare

you gave, you, Krishnaswami, with that lion, and you with your goats, Nursail!"

"Lion?"

"Goats?"

Mr. Smith stepped down from the cart and stretched his legs. They were very stiff. He walked around to look at the three goats once more, and to pat the white one on the head. She was a beauty! But the three goats had become two oxen. The same two oxen. He looked at his boys. They looked at him. Everyone smiled broadly.

"A dream!" he sighed. "Well, I knew it was too good to be true,—fifteen miles an hour in *India*." Then he touched his kodak thoughtfully. "Boys, if I could send home to America a picture of a lion drawing me in a cart and a picture of three goats drawing one of you in another cart, with '*Speed Away*' under one picture and '*O Zion Haste*' under the other picture, do you think it might help to startle the boys of America into realizing that missionaries in India need automobiles to get the King's Business done safely and sanely and swiftly?"

"But, of course, Sahib!" they gasped. "Of course it would help. But where could you get such pictures?"

"Something in my bones (mostly my wish bone, I admit!) tells me that when I get this roll of film developed there will be two surprising pictures in the lot."

"I hope so, Sahib."

"And I hope so, too, Sahib. For, of course, the grown people in America doubtless found your talks so absorbing that they thought you were satisfied to

continue working under the same old difficulties. And you say they get tired of being asked for this and that. But how often have you said that God lets the young paint pictures in their minds, Sahib, and play. So that out of their play and out of their pictures something indelible gets stamped on their brains. Something imagination has made from the truth, so that they can put themselves in another's place and can know just how maddening it must be to crawl and creep in a slow cart when you long to whiz and whirl in a fast one."

Nursai smiled. "If they know arithmetic, Sahib, tell them this problem: 1 missionary + 1 auto = 4 missionaries — 1 auto. Those boys in America will want you to be four men!"

Something tells me he will be equal to four men some day soon. For imagination has marvelous magic. Perhaps you can think of some simple way to begin imagining your own missionaries in automobiles until it becomes—true!

XXVII

ANCHORING A SUNBEAM WITH A YELLOW CORD

ORDINARILY we do not think of sunbeams as being good scholars. And indeed, this particular Sunbeam only became a sunbeam after she began being a scholar. Before that she had been more like one continuous thunder-clap after another.

"The child must be possessed of evil spirits, that's sure!" groaned her mother.

"Nobody can do anything with her," moaned her brothers.

"Nobody *wants* to do anything with her," frowned her father. But there they were all wrong, for our missionary wanted to do something with her.

"I have come to town to start a school for girls," said she, "and this is one of the pupils I want."

"But she's no good at all," objected her father.

"She's as cross as two sticks," warned her mother.

"She's really impossible," sneered her brothers.

"No matter," smiled the missionary, "send her along! I'll just have to make the best of her crossness."

So the Thunder-Clap went to school. It must be admitted that school was more or less of a joke in town, for everybody was quite sure that girls had no brains, so how *could* you teach them anything? Grown men smiled in their beards at this ridiculous white woman

who had come to town announcing that she would make brown girls wise. Everybody knew that it could not be done! But of course you and I know that everybody was wrong. It could be done. And it was done. In case anybody ever had the least shadow of a doubt, all they had to do was to look at the Thunder-Clap!

The first month she was so unruly because of the difficulty of sitting still that she exploded into thunder-claps whenever anyone spoke to her. It took lots of patience to keep her in school! And of course she learned nothing at all, she simply wriggled and jiggled; although as a matter of fact she was noticing a great many new things, and the second month she fell in love with a slate! She and that slate could not be separated (except at the risk of a terrific thunder-clap). She thought that the slate pencil screeched and squeaked in a perfectly lovely way, and it suddenly became a great deal of fun to trace the funny little hooks and curves of writing on her slate, for every hook and curve had a name, so that when you put a certain hook beside a certain curve it meant something special—and that is the way the marvel of *sentences* caught hold of Thunder-Clap. She fell in love with sentences, too. It was the most surprising thing in the world to pick up a book, any book, and find it brimful of sentences. Sometimes she could read them, and sometimes she couldn't. Little smiles would begin rippling way back at her ears and come dancing around to her lips whenever she found one that could be spelled into sense! And of course the longer she stayed in school, the more sentences she could read; the more sentences she could

read, the more she smiled; the more she smiled the less of a Thunder-Clap she was; until she was altogether Sunbeam. It took about six months; but it was worth the waiting! From morning till night not a scowl nor a growl. It was the missionary who renamed her "Sunbeam," and loved her very dearly.

The truth of the matter is that the white teacher had little white sisters and nieces at home—darling, affectionate little mortals whom she longed with all her missionary heart to see. But of course there were three thousand miles of deep blue sea between America and India. So she did the next best thing and substituted little brown maidens for white sisters and white nieces,—indeed, it was astonishing how little difference there was;—and of them all, I think that the nearest and dearest was Sunbeam. Perhaps because she tried the hardest, changed the most, and loved the deepest.

In any case, everybody in town began to be proud of that school. Grown men smiled in their beards and said they would not have believed it, but wasn't it a miraculous sight to see girls reading as easily as the very pundits? They had not supposed it possible. Yet look at the girls! Just look at them! It was all very pleasant for the missionary to feel that her school was so popular; indeed, it was almost *too* popular, for the pupils were squeezed in so tightly that it was really uncomfortably crowded. There was not another inch of room for any new scholars, and she used to wonder what in the world she would do if another girl *should* come begging to enter.

But alas! alas! little she guessed that it was going to

be quite the other way around, and that instead of having one pupil extra she was going to have one pupil less. That would make room—but oh! She did not want that extra room; especially as that empty space belonged to little Sunbeam. She could not believe her eyes when she counted noses that Monday morning and Sunbeam's nose was not there to be counted!

"She is ill," thought the teacher, and made inquiries. But the other girls nudged one another, saying nothing, "for teacher will not like our news," they thought.

And Sunbeam did not like the news, either. Although just at first, on that Monday morning, she had been thrilled and happy. For, when she got up, she found that the sand in the courtyard was decorated with chalk designs. "A festival of some sort," she said to herself. She was still more sure of this when her mother came in with a brand new sari: silk, it was! And red, it was!

Sunbeam giggled and smiled: "Don't I look too lovely in it?" she laughed, preening herself and thinking how pleased the teacher would be to see her so charmingly dressed. Her old school sari had been dreadfully faded, and often it was rather soiled, for sitting on the floor all day long is very hard on clothes, of course. So she smoothed the brilliant silk with happy hands; then Astonishment Numbers Three and Four!—her mother actually began oiling her hair and looping necklaces around her neck, bracelets around her wrists, and anklets around her ankles.

"Dear me!" chuckled Sunbeam. "I'm just too grand for words. What *can* be going to happen?"

Well, it all came out soon enough—*she was going to be married!*

“Oh, but I don’t *want* to be married, and I *won’t* be married!” she gasped. “I’m going to school. Why, I’m not nearly through school yet. There are books and books and books that I haven’t read yet.”

“Tut! Tut!” stormed her mother, “who are you to say *I-want-to-this* and *I-want-to-that*? You must do as your father bids you; you are plenty old enough to marry, and if we wait any longer it will be a positive disgrace to us all to have you around. You really ought to have had a husband years ago, but you had such a cross, disagreeable reputation in town that your father couldn’t find anyone to want you. But now that you are suddenly so pleasant, and educated, too, he really had no trouble at all in making quite a good match for you. So stand still, and let me put these rings on your toes.”

“I don’t want rings on my toes!” wailed Sunbeam, heartbroken. “I don’t want any horrid old husband! Oh, I wish I hadn’t improved a bit, I wish I were still cross and disagreeable so nobody would want me around! I won’t get married—I won’t I won’t! I’ve *got* to go to school. Why, mother, there’s my own little place on the floor: it will be empty without me! Who’s going to sit on my own little place if *I’m* not there? Who’s going to read out of *my* book? I’ve just got to go to school, mother.”

“Stuff and nonsense!” said her mother sternly,—but sadly, too. “There’ll be plenty of other little girls to come along and sit in your place. You know all you

need to know. Anyhow, your father has arranged the marriage, so you have nothing to say about it. You had much better get it over with quietly, for when you get to your new home your mother-in-law will have lots of things to teach you herself—not quite like school, maybe, but you'll have to learn her way of cooking and caring for the house."

"Oh! Oh! Oh!" wailed Sunbeam, "I don't want any horrid old mother-in-law! I *wantogotoschool*, I——"

"Silence!" roared her father, stamping into the room. And silence there was! For fathers in India are not at all like fathers in America. I think that they love their daughters; but they love something else more. It is something called *Custom*. Custom means "doing things the way they have always been done"; and one of the customs of India has always been that girls should be married by the time they are twelve. Every father in India knew this. Every father in India felt that he *must* do it. Every father in India had heard from the priests and the Hindu holy books that if he should die, with his daughter unmarried, it would go hard with him in the other world. Yes, it would: the gods would not like it. When they saw him coming they would shout down at him, "Why have you not done your duty, man? Why have you not found a husband for your daughter yet?"

So Sunbeam's father was simply doing his duty. He loved her, perhaps; but he loved Custom more. He was afraid of Custom! It *had* to be obeyed. So Sunbeam was married, just as he planned. A yellow cord was hung around her neck, a little gold piece dangled

from the cord—for a yellow cord plus such a gold piece form the wedding ring of India. And it anchored Sunbeam. It anchored her indoors. It anchored her to the part of her husband's house which is called the *zenana*, meaning the rooms where the women must stay: no more running outdoors to play! No more starting off in the morning for school! No more visiting next door! No more freedom or fun! For that yellow cord anchored Sunbeam *forever*. You can hardly blame her for not feeling Sunbeam-ish any longer. She really wept buckets of tears: she sighed and cried. She was utterly miserable until one day when the white teacher discovered her new home and came to call.

There never was a visit like that visit. It put new life into Sunbeam, for the missionary said: "Dear child, this marriage breaks my heart almost as much as it breaks your heart. But I know God expects both of us to make the best of it. So the thing for me to do is to come to see you as often as possible, and the thing for you to do is to recommend your new religion to this whole houseful of new relatives. Had you thought of that?"

No, it had never dawned on Sunbeam. Not once! She hung her dear little brown head and confessed that she had wickedly been thinking only of herself.

"I know," smiled the missionary, lovingly, "but suppose that from now on you think about *others*. Don't you remember that in school one day I told the Bible story about a great captain named Naaman. Oh, a very great man, indeed; a very important man; a man

used to commanding and to being obeyed. But he was a *leper*. I don't need to tell you what a dreadful disease leprosy is, dearest, for India has lepers on almost every street. Well, the whole point of the story for *you* is that in Naaman's household was a little Syrian maid servant, just your age. The most unimportant little slave girl, anchored in the service of that family, to fetch and to carry and to mind everyody else and never speak up! Yet one day she actually screwed up her courage and went into the presence of the great lord Naaman: 'Oh master,' she said, 'down in Israel there is a man of God with power to heal the sick. I really think he could cure you of your leprosy; he is the prophet Elisha, master.' And because that one little anchored slave girl spoke up so bravely, Naaman decided to go to see this man of God down in Israel,—and he was cured. Don't you see how nearly this is like your own case, my dear? Suppose you sing our little Christian songs all day long! Suppose you pray that God will help you to be happy and cheerful and kind instead of glum and silent and disagreeable! It seems to me that it might make a real change in this household."

Now surely that was a very big order. For there were dozens of persons in that house, and they had all lived there for years and years, whereas Sunbeam was an absolutely new comer. But she had had a new idea given her! It was something very definite to do. If you had been there in India you could have heard her pray each evening: "Oh Lord Jesus, thy little slave

did not do much good *today*, but do help her tomorrow. She is such a stupid little slave, Lord Jesus, she needs Thy help every single minute."

Well, Sunbeam is *still* anchored in that gloomy old zenana. It would be very pleasant to say that everybody was made over just because of her; but that would be stretching the truth, I fear! But this we can say, honestly and truthfully; the entire family are beginning to be interested in her little Bible. "Can you find us that story the missionary told the other day when she was here?" they often ask.

So Sunbeam will turn the pages and turn the pages, but it is like looking for a needle in a haystack. "Alas!" she will cry, "I am such a stupid girl, I don't even know enough to find the story here in God's Book. But I think maybe I could tell it by heart, doesn't it start this way?"

So she tells it, and if anybody thinks she has made a mistake, they correct her, so that sometimes you really would not recognize the best-known Bible stories: but this you *would* recognize—that Sunbeam was doing her best, and if more of the other little wives anchored with yellow cords could do as much as she, then India would be a different place, I think.

XXVIII

THE STRETCHABILITY OF LITTLE MR. INDIA RUBBER

LITTLE Mr. India Rubber straightened the turban on his head and tried to look very dignified. It was either a case of looking dignified or of—crying! It would never do to cry with a whole parcel of outcaste boys standing around watching him, for the truth of the matter is that a high caste boy has no business to look over his shoulder and not watch where he is going. All sorts of things seem to get in his way: things that really cannot be blamed, since they have been on that particular spot for years and you ought to know better than to bump into them. This particular thing was a tree-trunk! A big solid palm tree-trunk. Yet there was little Mr. India Rubber so absorbed in looking over his shoulder that he walked straight into that trunk and fell down. It was a very undignified proceeding. He wouldn't have had it happen for the world, so he picked himself up, straightened his turban and walked on as solemn as you please. But his knees and elbows and face were dreadfully scratched; and his nose and his chin were bleeding badly—a great deal seemed to have happened to him in that one short half minute!

The White Sahib was glad to notice that the outcaste boys neither snickered nor giggled nor called out in-

sulting remarks to this boy who did not look where he was going. But the White Sahib was not very wise in the ways of India or he would have known that nobody *dared* to laugh, a reason he soon learned when he said to the tall brown teacher beside him: "That little Mr. India Rubber will certainly know me the next time he sees me! He got a nasty spill rubbering over his shoulder, didn't he? But you've got these lads well trained, they never taunted him once—that was a fine Christian spirit for them to show."

The brown teacher sighed: "Ah Sahib, that was not so much a Christian spirit as an old left-over heathen spirit; no doubt you are too new in India to tell at a glance that the lad you saw is from a high caste Hindu family, while these boys of ours are outcastes. Outcastes have grown up desperately afraid of other castes, Sahib; why shouldn't they be, when all their lives they have been forced to live outside the village walls?"

"Really?" said the visitor, "and is that an uncomfortable place to live?"

"*Uncomfortable?*" gasped the young brown teacher. "Ah Sahib, I see that you really do not understand how desperately uncomfortable it is to be an outcaste. But I that speak unto you, *know!* For was I not an outcaste myself? Yes, Sahib, I that speak unto you lived outside the village walls; when I ventured inside those walls I knew how careful I must be never to let even my shadow fall on a high caste person; I knew I must slink down side alleys to get out of their way. I knew I must never let even my shadow fall on the food which caste people were to eat, neither must my shadow fall

on the well where caste people draw their water; and as for drawing any of that water myself, ah Sahib, I knew it would spoil that well forever! Pollute the water so that no caste person would dare drink from it again. I knew that if I wanted to hand anything to a caste man I must first lay it down on the ground so that he could pick it up without danger of touching me. I knew that I must cringe and cower in the presence of all caste people; I knew that never, as long as I lived, would I have enough to eat—just the garbage of the village to pick over, and the carcasses of dead animals. That is what it means to be an outcaste, Sahib, an *untouchable*.”

“Dear me! Dear me!” sighed the white gentleman from America, “this all sounds like a nightmare to me. Do you mean to tell me that there are *many* such unfortunate outcastes in India?”

“Many? Oh yes Sahib, there are fifty millions of us.”

“*Fifty millions!*” gasped the visitor. “Mercy on us! Why, fifty millions is half the entire population of the United States. And imagine half of America living in such fear and bondage! Why in the world should India be full of high castes and low castes and outcastes, anyhow?”

“Ah Sahib, it is the religion of India which teaches this. For have we not always been told that, long years ago when the world was first made by our great god Brahma, out of his head sprang the highest caste, the Brahmans—men born to be scholars and priests, men born to be worshipped and obeyed almost as the

god Brahma himself is worshipped and obeyed. Then from the hands and feet of the god Brahma we were told that the lower castes came—men born to work with their hands: goldsmiths and silversmiths, weavers and potters and farmers. While all the poor fifty million outcastes were born afterwards to do the most lowly of tasks, men not considered fit to associate with those born from the head or the hands or the feet of Brahma. So from our infancy we outcastes all understand that it is our task to collect the village refuse, to cart away the dead animals and eat them and save the skins. Indeed, Sahib, no one but an outcaste will touch leather or eat beef. No caste man will beat a leather drum, for instance. Just we outcastes beat them! Even the idols have no use for us, so we had to make idols of our own. You look astonished! But didn't we have to have *something* to worship? Well, we would whittle a stick of wood and call it a god; or we would set up a stone, daub it with paint and worship it, for even outcastes are hungry for God, Sahib."

"I see," said this Sahib from America, very softly. "But it doesn't seem to me that you could get very much comfort from a god that was only a slab of stone."

"We didn't!" sighed the young brown fellow. "My grandfather didn't, my father didn't, and I didn't. But it was the best we knew until one surprising day when a Sahib as white as yourself came over from America to our village and told us about God-the-Father. We could hardly believe our ears. We thought the Sahib did not realize that we were *outcastes*. We thought

that a God like his must be meant only for grand high caste people, or possibly for low caste people like the weavers and the potters. But, Sahib, God-the-Father was for *us*, too! We listened and listened and listened. We smiled and smiled and smiled."

"Yes," said the American, "I can understand why you smiled."

"And so we have been Christians ever since. But such strange, stupid Christians, Sahib; for not one of us could spell; not one of us could read; not one of us could earn a living except by doing the poor lowly work that outcastes always do; so how your missionary did have to work with us! Teaching us. Lifting us. Inspiring us. Changing us from the inside out, so that we would not be men of cowardice but men of courage, so that we would know how to be clean and decent and wise. Well, it took *years*. Yet here I am today, a teacher myself, trying to lift and teach and inspire these other outcastes boys."

The man from America shook hands with the brown man: "I'm mighty proud to know you," he said, "I'm proud of the fine English you have learned to speak; I'm proud of the fine example you show to these brown youngsters every day. But I just wish you could do something also for that vain little Mr. India Rubber that went by here a few moments ago rubbering over his shoulder at me. It's all wrong that he should be so narrow as to consider himself superior to these splendid boys of yours. For your boys aren't outcastes any more, you know."

"That is very true, Sahib, for when the Saviour takes

hold of an outcaste He lifts him and lifts him and lifts him. People are just *people* to the Saviour. He loves us all alike. But I wouldn't worry about that Brahman boy whom you call little Mr. India Rubber. For, Sahib, if he keeps his eye on this school long enough, I think maybe he will have to begin to stretch his narrowness."

The American gentleman laughed as he stepped into his automobile: "Stretchability and India rubber ought to mean one and the same thing! So here's hoping my little friend will stretch all he can, as soon as he can! Meanwhile I've had a splendid visit with you—I'm glad my missionary friends recommended me to come. Goodbye, and God bless you!"

He whizzed away. And the brown teacher with his brown boys were left behind. Little Mr. India Rubber was also left behind! For by this time, of course, he had reached home. You will remember that his knees and elbows and face were scratched from bumping the tree-trunk, and that his nose and chin were bleeding; so he really was a sorry sight as he walked indoors.

"Mercy on us!" gasped his mother in great alarm, "where has my precious Stick-of-Candy been?"

Her precious Stick-of-Candy (*Metaya* is the way to say it in India) was about to relate his woes in a very loud, cross voice when he suddenly became tongue-tied, for there beside his brown mother sat a *white* lady. The world suddenly seemed to be full of white people. . . .

This lady held out her hand: "I know exactly how to make those scratches feel comfortable," she smiled,

“for that’s what I came to India to do—to help the sick. See, here in my bag is this wad of soft cotton and a bottle of pale yellow liquid. If I put a little of the ointment on the cotton, and the cotton on your knees and elbows, then tomorrow you will feel like a new person.”

Little Mr. India Rubber felt like a new person already! “All right,” he said majestically, and came near enough so that she could decorate his knees and elbows. And whether it was because he had seen his first two white persons in one day, or whether it was the cotton-batting cure, or whether it was because he really was astonished what fine boys outcastes could become, nobody knows to this day,—but certain it is that Little Mr. India Rubber’s entire family have had to stretch and stretch their old narrow opinions as they watched our missionaries at work with the outcaste people of India.

“What a religion these Christians have!” said Mr. India Rubber’s father, admiringly. “A religion that can lift mere scum into being scholars is worth looking into seriously.”

So that is how it happens that Little Mr. India Rubber is now looking into it, seriously, by attending our mission school; and every day he is stretching, stretching, stretching!

XXIX

THE FOOLISH LITTLE SKIPPING SARI

THE foolish little skipping sari did not feel like skipping. Oh no indeed: it felt more like lying very, very still, and groaning very sadly and moaning very madly; more like sighing very drearily and crying very wearily. Yet up rose that little sari and—skipped! Yes, a regular hop-skip-and-a-jump. Oh that foolish sari! And that foolish little girl draped in the sari! For of course you know that a sari is only six or seven yards of soft material draped around the nice brown body of a little Hindu girl, draped and looped without a single pin or button to hold it in place, so that when the little girl skipped, the skipping sari unlooped itself here and there, and the little girl had to keep tucking it up and tucking it up and tucking it up. Altogether life was a perfect nuisance; for in spite of pills and skipping, she was really not one bit better. Not one single bit.

It was discouraging, for she had been so sure that the White Mem Sahib knew what she was talking about.

Now no doubt you are wondering what in the world was the matter, so I shall have to tell you that India was the matter! For India did not know what to do for little girls who fell in the fire and burned their knees until they grew painfully red and painfully puffy,

until they grew so painfully stiff and so painfully covered with sores that the little girl herself ached all over. No, India did not know what to do: India said that the gods must be angry with the small maiden, that evil spirits were undoubtedly inside her, that the only possible thing to do was to frighten those spirits away. So India beat a terrible drum all night long; but the evil spirits still seemed to linger. Then India heated a very hot iron, and as if the little girl did not have enough burns already, India burned a new spot to frighten the spirits away. But they did not seem to frighten easily. No, they lingered on and on; and the little girl grew hotter and hotter. India grew desperate and shook the little girl, shook her and shook her and shook her—hoping to shake out the evil spirits. But they would not shake out! So India gave her up.

"We have done all we could," sighed granny, folding her hands, tired from so much shaking.

"The gods must be *very* angry with her," sighed her aunts, folding their hands, too.

"She will die," said the uncles.

"She will die," echoed the cousins.

"This was a good deal of trouble to take for a mere girl, if you ask me!" grumbled her father, who had had to go in the middle of the night to fetch drummers from the caste of people who beat drums. He had not enjoyed paying them, I fear, especially as it seemed to do not the slightest good.

Yes, India gave the little girl up. India sat back and folded its hands and said: "We have done what we could. We have tried all the ways we know."

But the little girl's mother never for one moment gave her up. Mothers *are* like that, even mothers in India.

This one pulled her sari close about her face and slipped out of the zenana. Then through various doors and passages she secretly slipped out of the house itself until she was on the street. She had not been on the street for years and years and years—it was forbidden! But what did she remember about forbidden things when that precious little child was full of pain? For she had heard of a Woman Who Chased Pain; yes, a woman who *laughed* at pain and gave it a pill. A white woman, too, who came from over the sea where they evidently knew things that India did not know. It was true that parts of India did not approve of white women: her own husband, for instance, said that it was all perfect nonsense, that the white woman must be an enormous boaster to think that she could cure things that *India* could not cure. But the truth of the matter was that here and there all over town there were people who *had* been cured; people whom India had had to give up! There was the Woman-With-the-Broken-Back, for instance. What could India do for her? Nothing, of course. Yet that little White Mem Sahib had strapped her up into a regular bundle of white rags until she looked like some stiff log; and by and by—in a month or so—she was as well as anybody else. India could hardly believe its eyes! The whole town buzzed with the news of it; and part of the buzzing leaked into the zenana where the Little Girl with the Burnt Knee lay groaning. Nobody al-

together believed the story; yet here was the little girl's mother daring to go out on the street in search of that Mem Sahib Who Chased Pain. For perhaps if she could chase away broken backs, she could also chase away burnt knees. Who knew?

Well, our doctor knew! Very gladly she put on her pith sun-hat and snatched up her medicine satchel. Very gladly she hurried through dusty streets to the zenana where the poor burnt knees were blistering and festering. . . .

"Oh, you dear little girl!" she cried when she saw the knees. And I rather imagine that she wanted desperately to shake those stupid grown-ups who had been shaking the little girl. Maybe she would have liked to beat a drum at them and burn a little burn on *them*—but she wasted no time on such thoughts.

"Bring me some hot water at once," she ordered, and set to work on those poor puffy knees, which had not been kept particularly clean nor particularly cool nor particularly comfortable. When they were beautifully bandaged, with healing salve to ease the pain, the doctor left some pills.

"Take three pills one hour, and skip the next hour," she ordered. Surely that sounded plain enough! So every other hour up rose the weary sari and—*skipped*. An hour is such a long, long time to hop-skip-and-jump when your knees are burned and blistered and bandaged. The little girl was completely discouraged because she felt no better.

"Ha! Ha!" sneered her father, "it's no more than

I expected. Sheer folly to think a white woman can do what India can't do!"

"The child will die!" said the aunts.

"Die? Of course!" echoed the cousins.

"No! No! No!" sobbed the little brown mother, and once more she pulled her sari over her face and slipped out on the street in search of the White Mem Sahib Who Chased Pain.

"How do you do?" smiled our doctor, "I hope your little girl is much better."

"Oh Mem Sahib, she gets worse. It is all she can do to skip——"

"*Skip?*" interrupted the doctor, very much puzzled. "Don't you dare let her skip! She must lie perfectly quiet for weeks and weeks!" So then the amazing misunderstanding was explained, and the good doctor once more clapped her sun-hat on her head and hurried to the zenana where the little skipping sari was again trying to get to its feet and skip.

"Oh my dearest dear," sighed our doctor, "lie right down, and don't budge until I give you the order. For if you do *exactly* as I say from now on, you can be perfectly well. You really can."

And the little girl believed every word of it. Her father had *his* doubts, and the aunts and uncles had *theirs*; but the little girl obeyed all instructions, so that in the course of time off came the bandages, and there were her knees just as brown as they ever had been, just as smooth as they ever had been. For the sheer fun of it, she skipped a little skip to prove that

it did not hurt at all. Her father saw her do it; so did her aunts and cousins.

"I am well," she said.

"Yes, you are well!" they agreed.

"Everything the White Mem Sahib said has come true," she announced.

"Yes, everything *has* come true," they agreed. So the news of her recovery buzzed all over town, just as the news of other such recoveries was buzzing; and on Sunday morning when India heard the Christian converts singing in our mission chapel, India really could not resist strolling a little nearer to listen. Then because the things our doctor had said about pills and recovery all came true, India decided that maybe what was said about God might be true, also. So India listened, and watched, and waited, and hoped. Indeed, with every new patient who is cured there is a new group of families listening and watching and hoping.

XXX

TWENTY MILES FROM SUNDAY

It seemed astonishing that nobody in town had heard a single word about Sunday, when all the time Sunday was only twenty miles away in the Village of Dry Wells. Weren't there seven days in a week? So didn't you sit in the market place selling your wares on all seven of those days, one exactly like another? Of course. Yet all the time Sunday was twenty miles away in the Village of Dry Wells, where Devasahayam found it.

Devasahayam was a merchant, and early one morning he rode away in his bullock cart toward this Village of Dry Wells to do business with another merchant. But he might just as well have stayed home, for it was Sunday in that village twenty miles away, so the merchant was not in his stall.

"Is he sick?" Devasahayam inquired of another merchant in a stall nearby.

"No-o, not exactly *sick*," said this other man, shrugging his shoulders, "but it's *Sunday*."

"Sunday?" repeated Devasahayam, "but what has this thing-called-Sunday to do with keeping a man from selling goods?"

"Well, I don't know much about it, for it's only struck him suddenly. I do know, however, that it's

part of a new religion in town, a religion which makes a man rest one day in seven. It also makes him go and sing hymns indoors and pray to the God of Sunday to bless him all the rest of the week."

"Did you ever!" exclaimed Devasahayam. "I should think it would simply *ruin* his trade, missing this one good day of business."

"Um'm," chuckled the other merchant, smiling, "but why should I worry about *his* trade, when his customers just step over to *my* stall and fill their needs? As for me, I wouldn't care if Sunday came every day in the week, it's so profitable for me! See? Anything I can do for *you* in his absence?"

So Devasahayam did business with this wily business man who did such fine trading on Sundays because his rival was off somewhere singing hymns. Devasahayam did not know what hymns were, so after purchasing the goods he needed, he sauntered over in the direction where singing could be heard. The place was a poor enough affair, with matting walls that only went part way up to meet the roof. He had been expecting to see some gorgeous temple with carved columns, a monstrous gold idol, rare incense in the air; yet here was just the cheapest kind of a building and plain every day worshippers sitting on the ground, singing. That was all.

"Where is their God?" asked he, peering indoors.

"Sh! Sh!" warned a man beside him. "Don't talk out loud, my good fellow, I want to hear what they say in there. Their God is inside the church, but nobody has ever seen Him. He's invisible, but the speaker in

there is just explaining how He's Everybody's God and is loving us all, and lives inside each of us. Pretty strange news, isn't it?"

"Perhaps!" said Devasahayam, and strolled away. He thought that he was not much interested in a God-Who-Could-Not-Be-Seen and yet who made men stop working one day in seven. But when he had travelled all those twenty miles home, somehow he could not get the memory of it out of his mind:—a man must fear this unseen God very desperately indeed in order to worship Him one whole day in seven, a day when he did not dare to do business! What a strong and powerful God He must be; what a lot He required of His followers. Devasahayam was glad that he had left Sunday twenty miles behind him! Then certain phrases began to come to his memory: "*Everybody's God*"—"invisible"—"*everywhere*"—"in each of us."

"Dear me! Dear me!" trembled Devasahayam. "How do I know but that He is here with me this very minute? I may have carried Him away from the Village of Dry Wells without knowing it." And the longer he thought about it, the more uncomfortable he grew: for suppose it was expected of *him* to begin resting one day in seven? To go and sit in a church with matting walls? To sing those songs?

It takes all day and all night to travel twenty miles in a bullock cart, so by the time he reached his own village he tried to forget the whole affair. "Sunday is twenty miles behind me!" he chuckled; so just as usual he sold his wares in the bazaar, cheating whenever he dared, just as everyone cheated. But . . . he . . .

could . . . not . . . get . . . Sunday . . . out . . . of his mind; so when seven days had passed since his visit to the Village of Dry Wells, he was so disturbed that he said to his wife: "I am not going to the bazaar to-day."

"You are possessed of an evil spirit, you are ill!" she cried in a perfect panic.

"Woman, be calm," he ordered. "This is religion."

"But such a *strange* religion," she sighed, for she could see that he was upset over this day called Sunday.

"How will you observe the day?" she asked.

"That is not for a mere woman to know," he said, loftily. And she meekly left him alone, understanding (as all women in India understand) that not an idol in any temple is ever really flattered by worship from a woman. But she could not help standing outside the doorway and poking her head inside to watch him! He had his two sons with him. They were trying to sing something, but they did not know how to begin. However the boys were enjoying it thoroughly.

"We *like* Sunday! We like it!" they chuckled.

"'Sh! 'Sh!" whispered their father, "Everybody's God may hear you! How do I know whether He wants us to enjoy Sunday or not?"

"But you especially told us how happy the worshippers seemed over in the Village of Dry Wells."

"So they did. Well, perhaps we may *look* happy without *acting* too happy; that ought to please God both ways."

So they looked as cheerful as three persons could who also were trying to be sober; it was the strangest experi-

ence in the world. The son named Precious Jewel said he felt as if he were full of secrets; the son named Gentle Spirit said *he* felt as if he would have to go out and tell somebody else all about it; but they said all this in whispers, and were soon busy trying to sing a song, making it up as they went along. There was no tune to it, and the words did not rhyme at the end, but it was as beautiful a hymn as was sung in all India that Sunday, I think. These were the words:

*"We rest one day in seven—
Devasahayam rests,
Precious Jewel rests,
Gentle Spirit rests,
We pray to Everybody's God as best we know how,
As best we know how,
On Sunday; on Sunday.
Oh Everybody's God, hear us!
Hear us! Hear our worship."*

"I like Sunday much better than going to the temple to worship the big stone idols, don't you?" Precious Jewel asked.

"Indeed I do," agreed Gentle Spirit. "To tell the truth, I'm rather afraid of those idols. Their stone hands are so big, their stone ears are so long, their stone eyes are so staring. When I kneel down to worship, I always wonder what they will do to me."

His brother laughed: "What *can* they do? They're only stone, you silly boy."

The silly boy shook his head: "Just the same, I like Everybody's God much better. I like Sunday."

Whereupon their eight-year-old sister said softly:

"I wouldn't be afraid to worship on Sunday as you do, myself."

"Oh, mercy on us!" cried her brothers in a shocked duet. "You don't suppose that Sunday is for *women*, do you? Sunday is just a day for men-folks."

"Oh!" sighed the disappointed eight-year-old sister.

"O-oh!" sighed the nine-year-old sister.

"O-o-oh!" sighed the ten-year-old sister. For every single one of them thought Sunday sounded very lovely; but they might have known that it wouldn't be for girls: nothing in India ever was. But nobody could keep them from listening with all their ears, and on Monday morning they would boast about it to other little girls, and the other little girls would tell their mothers, their mothers would tell their fathers, their fathers would tell their grandfathers, until practically everybody in town knew about the Merchant-That-Kept-Sunday. And nobody liked it!

"If he keeps this up he will get into trouble. His old idols will be provoked, they will send sickness upon him, or famine, or death."

"I hear that he rode back to the Village of Dry Wells last week and made all sorts of inquiries about this new religion, and when he came home he said he would not worship the idols again. He said that Christians made no distinction between high caste families and low caste families, so although he is high caste himself he actually invited one of the low caste weaver families to come and worship Everybody's God with him last Sunday morning!"

"*What?* Did Devasahayam break caste? Then he

must stop doing it! He may bring trouble on our entire village. Our crops may fail. Our cattle may die. We will all fall sick; for didn't the god Brahma make some men high caste and some men low caste? Well, he wants them to *stay* as he made them. A man who breaks caste is a disgrace. He is dangerous. What shall we do to Devasahayam to show him our disapproval?"

"Let us stone him!"

"Let us burn his house!"

"Let us stop buying anything from him at the bazaar."

So you can see for yourself that terrible things were in store for the family of Devasahayam, for they burned down his little straw house, they threw stones at the brothers and sisters, they refused to buy at his stall in the market place, they poked fingers of scorn at him when they saw him:—

"There goes a Sunday man!"

"There goes a man who breaks caste!"

"Yes, imagine a merchant *eating* with a weaver! Imagine a merchant *worshipping* with a weaver! Bah, the man is crazy!"

"There goes a man who wants to burn his old idols, does he? Stone him! stone him!"

So they stoned him. They burned down his house. And he was bruised, homeless, poverty-stricken. But when Sunday morning came around once more he and his little sons went to the house of the weavers—those low caste weavers, mind you!—and the news spread

through the entire village that they were all singing songs to Everybody's God, and praying together.

"Then burn down the weaver's house!" the village people yelled. "Burn it down! Stone the weavers! Destroy their house! Tear their cotton into shreds! Bah, we have had enough of these Christians. Let us chase them out of town."

So that you could have seen a very dreadful sight that Sunday morning, for a hut was blazing and crackling and smoking, and another family was homeless and hungry and out of work. Dozens of little children looked at the faces of their parents, wondering what it all meant. Ah, it meant that it was hard work to become Christians in India! India did not like it! India had no use for new ways. . . .

But through all the horror of fire and persecution Devasahayam acted like a pillar: "I will not bend the knee to an idol! Everybody's God will care for me! His Bible especially says 'Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Well, if they kill us we shall have God's kingdom of heaven to go to! If they let us live, then we will go outside the village walls with the outcastes and worship God there."

"Ah-ha!" roared the villagers. "You wouldn't dare go and live with the *outcastes*, Devasahayam. Surely a high caste merchant would *never* live with such scum as the outcastes."

"Watch me!" he said; and on Monday morning they saw him living with the outcastes. To tell the truth the outcastes did not like it very much, at first. They

were afraid! But the thing they dreaded never happened; the merchant never kicked them nor abused them; he never put on airs or bossed them around. He was gentle and kind and poor. Oh, how poor he was! For he had no goods to sell any more, he had no stall in the market place. There were days when not a member of that family ever had enough to eat. . . .

"It is a frightful thing to be a Christian," some of the outcastes said.

"Oh, but see how quiet and gentle and happy he seems. See how sure he is that his new God will make everything right."

Indeed you can see for yourself that never was a man more closely watched than Devasahayam. Morning, noon, and night people spoke about the special look of peace that shone in his eyes and in the eyes of his family. And the first thing anyone knew, the outcastes that lived all around him were keeping Sunday just as he kept it,—men and women, boys and girls. It was a lovely sight for our missionary on the Sunday morning he rode into that village.

"Do you come from the Sunday Village of Dry Wells, Sahib?" people asked him.

"Yes, that is where I live, and I have heard how you have treated Devasahayam and his family. The great God in heaven wonders at your wickedness; for I ask you—is there any man among you as good as Devasahayam? Is there any other man as gentle? Is there any other man with such peace in his eyes? You would do well to copy Devasahayam, every one of you! For he is very dear to the heart of the One True God."

"Oh!" said the villagers in an awed chorus. Then somebody said the one thing that everybody was thinking: "Sahib, if we should get down into this new religion, we would have to rest one day in seven, I suppose. Well, while we were resting some other man would get the better of us! He would earn our wages! He would steal our places."

"Not so," said the missionary quietly, "for if you *all* rested, then you would all be equals, and no man could outdo another." So that is the way it came to pass that instead of being twenty miles from Sunday, Sunday came to *stay* in that village forever; for every man, woman, and child was touched,—touched by the sight of Devasahayam, the merchant who for the sake of Everybody's God was willing to lose house and business and possessions.

"We need a religion like that, ourselves."

"What a religion! We want to get down into it. We want to learn *all* about it. We want to learn *soon*! We are *hungry* for it! We are *starved* for it!"

Grown men hugged each other for sheer joy! Women cried! Little children laughed. It was the thing about which missionaries write home to America, the thing called a *mass movement*. It means a wonderful wave of joy carrying an entire tribe from heathendom into Christianity. But they all are hungry for facts, they all are starved for a fuller understanding—so they turn to us for help.

"Send us teachers and preachers," they beg. So I ask you today—what will *your* answer be to these people who have just discovered joy and Sunday and God?

XXXI

THE THUMB-PRINT OF A SHADOW

THE Shadow rubbed his hands together softly. He smiled all over his dark brown face as he watched the money-lender do the trick called writing, covering white paper with curious hooks and curves. It was all very mysterious to him,— this writing business, but very delightful: for had he not paid the next-to-the-last instalment of the debt he owed on his tiny farm? One more small payment of hard-saved rupees and the farm would be his—no mortgage, no money-lender holding out an avaricious hand croaking spitefully: "Pay up! Pay up, or your farm becomes mine, you slow-poke!" Oh, how he had saved! Oh, what a nightmare it had been all these dreary years—the fear of losing that little farm forever! But now he was nearly free. One more payment and he would be *entirely* free. Free! Free! Free! He rubbed his hands together softly as he watched the hooks and curves of writing being scratched on paper, stating exactly how the transaction stood.

"There!" said the money-lender, "it's all ready for you to sign your name here."

Of course you are not expecting a poor ignorant Hindu Shadow to know how to write his own name! But there were ways known to money-lenders in the

market-place, and the Shadow obediently dipped his thumb in a drop of ink, pressed it on the paper, and lo! the print of his thumb was a signature which no living man could fake. Secretly he was proud of that thumb print; proud, and relieved that his freedom from this staggering debt was so nearly won. He tucked the precious paper under his turban, and walked away, beaming. There had been so little to smile over in his life that when he met another man of his caste in the market-place he stopped him and made a boast of his recent accomplishment:

"Just look here," he chuckled, as he fumbled in his turban for the paper. "See where I signed my name? Well, that means I shall soon be a free man, for this says that in one more payment I shall have paid my debt."

"All very fine! Very fine!" groaned the other farmer enviously, for was he not up to his very eyes in debt himself? And was it not going to be a bad year for crops? So the envy of one Shadow was very pleasant to the other Shadow as he walked toward his little thatched hut to boast even more fully in the secrecy of his family. Seven smiling Shadows laid themselves down on the earthen floor to sleep that night, and seven smiling Shadows rose up from that floor the next morning. Seven smiling Shadows spent a very laborious day hoeing and planting the poor little farm which had so small a payment between it and freedom; so the labor seemed less labor than usual until sundown, when two strange men appeared upon the scene. Men bustling with importance and arrogance, rubbing their

brown hands together as our Shadow had rubbed his only yesterday. They were evidently pleased over something.

Said Stranger Number One: "Quite a fair little piece of property, on the whole, isn't it? Of course, I shall want to make certain changes."

"Oh, decidedly! Decidedly!" said Number Two, nodding his big scarlet turban. "You will doubtless make many changes. This poor fellow has been so ground down by debt that he hasn't . . ."

"*This poor fellow?*" repeated the Shadow to himself. "Can they mean *me?*" So he walked over toward them: "Sirs, I overheard your remarks, and I think you must have come to the wrong place, for this piece of property belongs to me. Puntiah is my name."

Stranger Number One laughed; a fat disagreeable laugh: "Oh, is it? Puntiah, eh? Well, Puntiah, to-morrow morning early you must move out, for this little farm of yours is mine now. All mine. You understand?"

But no, Puntiah did *not* understand. "*Yours?*" he repeated. "But how can that be, when only yesterday afternoon I went to the money-lender in the market-place and paid off all but the last small payment of rupees, so that in just a few more months of hard saving the farm will be all free of debt. Think of that, will you? How I've saved! Why, I have a paper that the money-lender wrote. With my own eyes I saw him write it, and when the proper time came, I signed it just where he told me—with a thumb-print. I have the paper all safely hidden in the thatch of my house,

very secret, sirs! But I will go and fetch it and show you that you have made a mistake in coming here." Puntiah hurried away.

"Poor fool!" said Stranger Number One.

"Simple old fellow! Almost too easy to swindle, isn't he?" said Stranger Number Two.

Presently Puntiah came running toward them with the precious document, and behind him trailed the six startled members of his family. "Oh surely this is going to be all right!" their faithful brown eyes pleaded. "Oh, surely when you strangers see our highly important paper with its highly important thumb-print you will nod your heads and go away bowing apologetically."

But no! Stranger Number One read the paper and said: "This seems to be just as I thought, it gives me a clear title to the farm."

Stranger Number Two looked over his shoulder, and read also: "Yes, assuredly, all perfectly clear. The deed states that as he cannot hope to pay off the staggering debt he still owes, he, Puntiah, hereby and herewith forfeits all claim to this farm, this building and its contents and hands the same over to you; and in order to make it quite legal here is the thumb-print of Puntiah."

"No! No!" cried seven stricken Shadows, their voices sounding strangled and agonized. "It is not clear! Puntiah's debt is not staggering, it is small. For only yesterday he carried to the money-lender a big basket of rupees. Oh, a surprising number of rupees, sirs—it took years to save them! We all helped! Oh,

the meals we have not eaten, the clothes we have not bought in order to pay that old money-lender. He took them and counted them, didn't he, Puntiah?"

"Yes, and when he counted them he said: 'Now I will write you a receipt,' so when he wrote it I made my thumb-print. See, here it is! You don't suppose I would sign away my farm, do you? Not just when I had paid the savings of years to clear it from debt?"

The strangers said they did not know what he *supposed* he had done, but according to the document he certainly *had* signed it away. Seven stricken Shadows could hardly believe their ears.

With great dignity Puntiah took his paper into his own hands: "There is the law and the British Government," he said.

"Oh yes, there is the law and the British Government," said the strangers. "Tomorrow we will settle this trouble."

So they set an hour to meet with the authorities, and departed. A little later seven stricken Shadows lay down on the earthen floor, but they could not sleep; they rose up in the morning with great circles of anxiety around their eyes. Not in all India were there people as stricken as they.

Not in all India? Ah well, that is hardly true, for at any moment of any day in India ignorant Shadows are being played upon by other crafty money-lenders; other thumb-prints are innocently signing away other farms; other strangers are turning out other families. . . .

"Can't I even keep my grind-stone?" wailed Puntiah's wife.

"Woman, the document says that this entire farm, with the house and all its contents belongs to me. Your husband has signed it. The law and the British Government say that he has signed it. So nothing belongs to you. Nothing! You had better be gone!"

"Alas!" sighed the seven Shadows; and like a million others, before and since, they trailed unhappily down the dusty roadway with none to care and none to help. This whole business of writing—was it not a frightful thing? To think that a little paper plus a little ink plus a thumb-print was doing this heart-breaking thing to families every day, and no one to care. No one to help. Oh those money-lenders! What enormously high interest they charged! How crafty they were! Even the law and the British Government could not help. There was no one to help. . . . Seven Shadows trudged wearily down that dusty roadway, all on account of a thumb-print. Seven Shadows lay down in the fields under the stars that night, all on account of a thumb-print. Seven Shadows arose in the morning, homeless and hopeless and breakfast-less, all on account of a thumb-print. And no one to help or to care!

But wait a minute, Puntiah, do not be quite so hopeless, for a man is coming briskly down the roadway, one of those white-faced men seen in town occasionally. Perhaps he is one of the British Government men, or maybe one of those Christian Sahibs about whom one heard such remarkable tales. Yes, that was a good

guess: a Christian Sahib with a voice much kinder than the British Government voice. "Tell me all about it," he says.

So they tell him. It is not a new story, he has heard it over and over about other thumb-prints. There was nothing that could be done, for if a money-lender said he was writing a receipt when he was writing a deed, who was to know what he *said* when there was the tell-tale thumb-print. It was all very sad; but the Sahib had one solution:

"I cannot give you back your farm or your lost rupees, Puntiah, for you have signed them away. But this I *can* do. I can put your boys and your girls in our mission schools so that they will learn to read and write. Then if there are ever any more documents to be signed, they can at least *know* what they are signing, and receipts will not be all the same as deeds in their eyes."

"Now that will be a good thing," nodded their father.

"Oh, very good," nodded the mother.

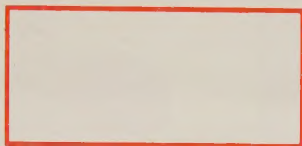
"Good for boys, anyhow," chuckled the sons.

"Good for *girls!*" smiled the shy daughters, not daring to dream that the wonder of an education was to be theirs. What a day it had been! Despair; and now this!

Then, in the kindness of his heart, the missionary let Puntiah build a small mat hut on a corner of the mission compound. He even gave him a job,—raising the mission vegetables; so that today, if you should visit India, you might find him among the pumpkins and peppers from Monday to Saturday, but on Sunday

mornings you will always find him in our little mission chapel singing with a grateful face to the God who can take the humblest of Shadows and turn them into self-respecting, self-supporting men and women through education and guidance and—love.

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